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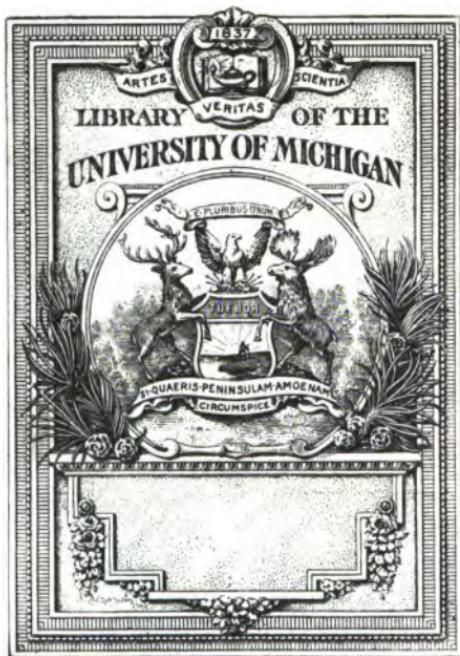
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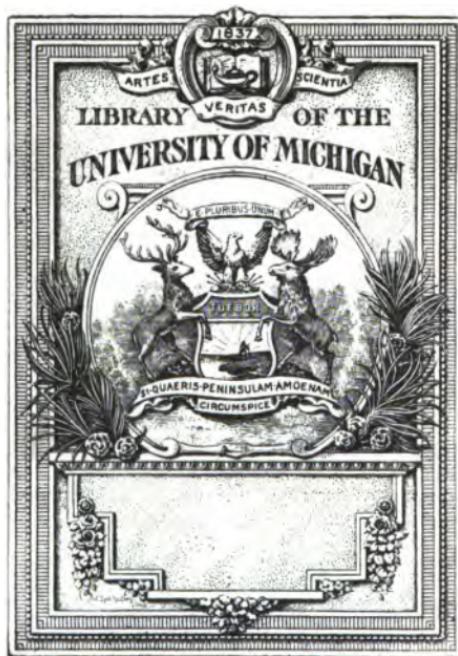
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**DEDICATED TO
MY WIFE.**

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THE WAR INEVITABLE

CHAPTER I.

A Royal Betrothal.

"I hate him! I hate him!" cried the Princess emphatically,—and it needed no close observation to gauge the depth of feeling underlying her words. Her soft blue eyes were suffused with tears and she grated her pretty white teeth angrily with the intensity of her emotion.

"My dear Alexandra," said her mother gently, "these scenes are childish, and you know that it is useless to rail against your destiny. His Majesty, for reasons best known to himself, has decided that your marriage to Prince Oscar is both desirable and necessary; and that being so, you would employ your time far better in preparations for your wedding than in unladylike exhibitions of temper."

Casting a reproachful glance upon her erring daughter the elder lady sailed majestically out of the room, convinced that the matter had been tactfully, if not gracefully, disposed of.

The Princess looked up with tear-dimmed eyes; a sob shook her whole frame and she muttered despairingly:

"Everybody is against me, even my own mother."

A girl of her own age entered the room, and seeing the dejected attitude of her companion, asked

"Hullo, Xandra! what's the trouble, dear? surely not that hateful marriage again? I thought that you had made up your mind to face it and try to overcome the discomforts and dislikes."

"Dislikes?" burst out the astonished Princess with intense indignation, "dislikes, indeed! What can you know of such things? What does it matter to you? What do you care if my life is spoilt? What do—Oh! I could kill him, I hate him so. Here am I, eighteen last week, never had any fun, no flirtations, just out, and wanting to enjoy myself and do the round of the Duke's house-parties when Uncle, just because he's a King, pitches on me—me above all people—just because I'm a Princess, and tells me I must marry that little idiot Oscar. Why, he's not even a man! and look at his character,—you know all about it without my saying anything. He's the scandal of Bonn—drunk every week, if not every night; lost half an ear in a fight; got a red scar from his nose to his right ear; doesn't look a gentleman, much less a Prince, and—and—I hate him."

"But, my dear Xandra, you're rather—"

"Oh, don't talk to me" cried the indignant young lady, breaking into her friend's attempt at speech with increased vehemence. "It's all because I'm a Princess! —If I'd been an ordinary person, or even only like you, a daughter of a Countess, I could have had my fling and then settled down with the man I love. But now? Made to marry a man I *loathe* the sight of—a dissolute impossible foreigner, who can't talk decent English! And can't I just see those hateful papers with their hideous caricatures of me and 'my handsome bridegroom' describing the affecting scenes and all the pretty incidents of the show? I know it all by heart,—columns about what I said as a baby, how sweet my voice is, my graceful carriage, how I rebuked the General and lastly the cause of the love-match that has ended so happily. Then the Dailies will have their sickening leaders beginning "Our hearts go out this day" or else "The world

will join with us in wishing long life and happiness" etc. you know the rest of it, don't you? Drivel! I suppose they think we don't read that sort of thing," then, going off at a tangent, she said—"at all events, I hope they give a good description of my dress. I wonder whether Madame will manage to make it fit,—but you can never trust her, you know. And then think of those odious crowds staring at me and their loud remarks about my looks, and the bobbing guards at the station. To think, too, that my mauve hat is a failure! Its too awful for words and I shall never forgive Jules for that. Oh! its hateful—all of it—all of them," she concluded, flinging her arms apart.

An outburst of tears ended this tirade against fate and milliners and the Lady Millicent essayed to comfort her unhappy young companion in a way known only to girls.

She felt herself that the case was hard and sighed deeply as she thought of Lord Ronald, the stalwart guardsman, to whom she was so soon to be united. He was above all things a man.

Poor Princess Alexandra! Fate had ordained that she should be the means of soothing the ever increasing friction between England and Germany; and the Royal marriage had been hastily arranged and was to take place in three days' time.

It is almost needless to say that Prince Oscar was not as black as his future bride had painted him. Tall, as were most of the Hohenzollerns, he had a commanding presence, a fine open countenance, and an unusually cheerful disposition. His bride to be, a girl of eighteen, very English, but not strikingly beautiful, had from the first taken an intense dislike to him. She was of an affectionate disposition, clever, musical and indeed, suited quite satisfactorily the set description of "accom-

plished"; but, like all her country-women, she believed in having something to say in matrimonial matters in which she was so directly concerned, and it was but natural that she should feel incensed at that which appeared a rather high-handed action on the part of her Uncle.

Her mother, the stately Duchess, Princess in her own right, had protested against the injustice of the proposal, but, being a shrewd woman of the world and seeking an advantageous match for her daughter, she was soon convinced that the marriage was in reality desirable from all points of view.

CHAPTER II.

A Fateful Day.

The wedding day opened in perfect harmony with the occasion, and wide-flung peals of joyous bells rang clearly out across the crisp, frosty air of the late winter. Snow-white flocculent clouds hung listlessly beneath the deep blue vault of the sky, and from the woods of Eton came the rough caws of the awakened rookeries. An army of men was rushing hither and thither in the narrow streets of ancient Windsor, some armed with evil-smelling paste and brush, others carrying extensible ladders, poles, glowing braziers or gaudy bunting—all intent on the work of beautifying, or rather putting to the already bedecked town those essential finishing touches. The great arch spanning the station entrance and exit had been tastefully decorated, and an enormous banner blazoned with a text of benediction suitable to the day. At ten o'clock, column upon column of glittering soldiery came marching with steady tramp up the steep hill, and soon a narrow lane lay clear between two seemingly endless lines of vari-coloured uniform and, behind them, a struggling mass of expectant humanity. Princess Alexandra was at the Castle already, and had calmed down to a dignified submission though, as she glanced over the immense crowd come to view her happiness the ever-ready tears sprang oftentimes, unbidden, to her soft-lashed eyes.

"Xandra, dear, come and dress now, will you?" and Lady Millicent linked her arm lovingly in that of the young Princess and smiled cheerfully up into her face,—

though she, too, felt nearer crying at the thought of losing her bosom friend.

"Very well; Millie—I suppose I must."

A gun spoke loud on the farther side of the Castle and the windows rattled ominously in their frames. Simultaneously the bells burst out afresh, ringing maddening strains of good augury and happiness, but seeming to the chief actor in the drama a sorry mockery of her own true feelings.

Another gun cracked harshly, and the Princess turned away with her friend,

"That means the Imperial Chancellor and—and—Oscar are coming. I am so sorry the Kaiser cannot come; he has been very good and generous. But—makes me so nervous, and he's so fierce looking—oh! what am I saying! Millie dear, please forget that I said that, for of course I did not mean it. Promise, dear?"

"Certainly, Xandra, but—"

"No, we won't discuss it at all, Millie. Uncle has thought it well to sacrifice me,—yes, it is a sacrifice—to remove the ill-feeling between Germany and England and, as Princess Alexandra" and here she drew herself up proudly, "I hope I may say nothing to increase it. Come on, Millie, I'm longing to get into my dress."

As they walked down the soft carpeted passage towards her room, a young aide-de-camp met them,

"Pardon me, your Highness, but there are a number of photographers downstairs, waiting to take you in your wedding dress, and your mother asked me to let you know, telling me you would be in the Round Tower."

"Thanks, Lord Billerton, its very good of you. But, I say, who are they?"

"Oh, let me think. They are Messrs. Cannon and Fright, Vanbilk, Dawnay, Falayette and one or two more

I can't remember,—but I'll find out, if you wish it?"

"Please don't trouble,—only warn old Fright, if he has come himself, that I'm very fussy to-day and can't stand him for long. By the bye, when shall we hear of your marriage, Lord Billerton?"

"In six weeks time, your Highness. But may I take this opportunity of congratulating your Highness and of wishing you every happiness."

"Thank you very much, my Lord,—you are most kind. I am sure we shall be very, very happy."

And the lie went out to the world, an additional proof of the already generally accepted version, "very, very happy." Not that Royal marriages are always ill-assorted, for from it; but in this one case the exigencies of international politics had demanded some such function, and the choice of the principal actors therein had chanced to be decidedly unfortunate—at least, so it seemed.

As the two girls walked towards their apartments, the slow boom of the Royal salute shook the historic pile from base to battlements. The Imperial train had been signalled and an expectant murmur rose from the struggling thousands as a warning whistle struck the ear. A steady beat of powerful cylinders was next heard, and the heavy engine snorted menacingly up the platform until the long, luxuriously appointed saloon was opposite the wide stretch of red baize. A short, thick set figure, clad in British Admiral's uniform, stepped towards the door; the young bridegroom was of the sea, and the Prince of Wales had elected to wear the insignia of that service to which he also had been bred and born. As the door was flung open, he leapt into the compartment and embraced his cousin, Prince Oscar, with considerable show of cordiality in the Continental fashion, bidding him a hearty welcome in the name of his illustrious sire

and the British nation, and expressed the universal sorrow felt for the Kaiser, whose serious illness prevented his being present in person. Ten minutes shaking of hands, and the Royal party stepped out,—the signal for a band to strike up the German National Anthem. In less than three minutes the postillioned carriages had set out upon their short journey to the Castle.

A series of sharp commands ran down the line of officers, and many thousand feet clicked sharply to the accompaniment of rattling rifles coming crisply to the "present."

Then occurred that which was to have terrible consequences in the near future. As the leading vehicle reached the line of people it was natural to anticipate some outburst of enthusiasm. But two years of Teutonic arrogance and deception over certain features of our foreign policy, had left an ineradicable mark upon the British populace; never had so much enmity been harboured by one race against another, and, indeed, there had for long been eminent writers with a full knowledge of the facts who prophesied open hostilities as unavoidable. The Government had known of this for some time, but judged that the excitement engendered on such an occasion would stifle all antagonism and bring to the fore those bursts of cheering in which Englishmen so excel.

But instead of a thunderous roar of welcome, the Imperial Chancellor (the official representative of the Kaiser) and his suite drove up the steep road through an almost silent crowd.

As the Chancellor emerged from the station approach into the High Street, he touched his hat, as seemed natural, to the crowd. When he realized that he would get no response that day, a black look swept over his grizzled features, a look boding ill for the nation that

dared thus trifle with the dignity of his position. The climax came quickly; from the back of the crowd rose a single voice, rough, loud and clear:

"Wot cheer, sonny?"

A ripple of titters ran like a wave over that vast, tightly packed crowd, and as the fatal remark was repeated down the street this developed into a great roar of laughter, in which the officers had all they could do to prevent their men joining. Then followed other vulgarities: all telling, none excusable.

"Get yer 'air cut!"

"Wot O! Look at 'is moustache!"

"Go 'ome ter Germany,—you ain't wanted 'ere."

"Won't Charlie Beresford wipe up 'is master's fleet?
Not 'arf."

"Feeling comfy, Cocky? Cheer up, old bird, we won't 'urt yer—not now, leastwise."

In vain policemen endeavoured to reach the offenders, in vain others, ashamed of their countrymen, told them forcibly to "shut up." The game seemed infectious, and the Chancellor can have been little pleased when eventually he drew up at the door of the private chapel.

It was remarkable, however, that he did not mention the occurrence to his august host, His Majesty the King, and this was taken as a sign that he had overlooked the unmannerly treatment to which he had been subjected, and the courtiers about his person felt accordingly much relieved for the Chancellor in Germany represents a people's will. But the Chancellor, in addition to many other accomplishments, was a born actor, and though he looked forgiveness, he harboured hatred; though he might appear unconcerned, he burnt inwardly with silent rage. He could neither forgive nor forget; they had not insulted him alone, but through him his master the

Kaiser and his beloved kingdom, the German Empire. And he registered a silent vow that from that moment he would devote all his energies to finding a means whereby he might humble the British nation to the very dust.

CHAPTER III.

The Chancellor Dissembles.

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The religious ceremony has been described by the press with such a wealth of detail that of it nothing need here be said. Of the reception afterwards, however, a few words are necessary. There, in the great hall and spacious suite of reception rooms, were met together not only the élite of England but of many neighbouring nations as well. Russian Grand Dukes, German Prince-lings and French nobles rubbed shoulders with the highest in our peerage, and there were also representatives in large numbers of the two services. The Chancellor, it was remarked, seemed more than usually affable, and, seeing the veteran sailor and tactician Admiral Sir John Angler chatting with the newly united couple, and, in his bluff, hearty way giving them his best wishes, he strode up to him, and slapped him genially on the shoulder,

“How now, Admiral, how now?”

The sturdy sea-dog turned round, astonished at the free condescension of the Chancellor.

“Right glad to see you, Prince,” he cried, grasping the proffered hand,—for above all men, Sir John was *persona grata* at court, either at home or on the continent, “may I congratulate you on this happy event, and express the wish that it will seal the bond of friendship between your great land and ours.”

“Very diplomatic, Admiral, and quite up to your form. How’s the Navy, now? going strong, eh? I suppose you intend to create a record in welcomes when His Majesty of Japan arrives?”

"We shall do our best, sir, to sustain a reputation for doing things well. Am I wrong in asking if His Majesty the Kaiser will grace our Review at Spithead?"

"Ah! my friend, that is wrapped up in the mysteries of the future. As you are doubtless aware our naval authorities have this year planned extensive combined manœuvres in the North Sea and His Majesty hopes to witness them in person. Tirpitz informed me that the late summer would be most suitable for the operations, and it is not unlikely, therefore that they may clash with your magnificent display. You will have how many battleships, did I hear?"

"That has not been decided, Prince," replied the tactful Admiral, "but we shall not disappoint His Majesty, I believe." Then as the Chancellor moved away with a smiling nod, he muttered "I wonder what all that gush was for, my clever friend? You are not usually so familiar and inquisitive as you proved yourself to-day. Well, we shall see later whether there is anything maturing at the back of your head. Ah! Fournier, how are you," and a noted French Admiral and he were soon engrossed in an animated technical discussion.

At the banquet that evening, the Chancellor made a speech. He had carefully prepared it beforehand, but had hurriedly altered certain sentences to suit his new state of mind. Our King had first toasted the young couple, who were to depart on the following day for Germany, and had, after a short but fitting reply from Prince Oscar, given the health of his august nephew through his representative. The strains of the German hymn had scarcely died away ere the Imperial Chancellor rose smartly to his feet, and glanced right and left over the applauding guests. A fine figure he made, too, stern, disciplined and great. Then he spoke.

"Your Majesties, Imperial Highnesses, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen. To-night I rise to address you on behalf of my Imperial Master, the Kaiser, and hasten to express his regret that unfortunate circumstances forbade his attendance on so historic an occasion. His Majesty your King has given you the Kaiser's health in a speech of exquisite wording, and the compliment he does to him, he does also to his illustrious grand-sire, the founder of the united German Empire over which, by Heaven's gracious will, he holds sway. This day is a day of rejoicing to us all, but more particularly to him personally. It has been the unhappy lot of our respective peoples to differ upon certain points of truly minor consideration, and these differences have unwittingly been the foundation of considerable ill-will,—an ill-will fanned by circumstances into sparks or racial enmity as unnatural in the one people as in the other. But the happy occasion which has drawn us all together to-day should be the means of drawing together for all time the countries we respect: the greatest peoples, I may say, in the world. It will prove, let us hope, not only a union of hearts but also a union of nations. In it lies a promise of that lasting neighbourliness that is so necessary and will prove so advantageous to both of us, and this day marks the commencement of a long era of international prosperity for the peoples of both nations. The soul of your people will go out to my people, and the soul of my people will go to your people. Need I comment upon the honour conferred upon Germany by this marriage,—it is to us a deep and abiding pleasure that there should be added to the Imperial family circle one of England's fairest daughters. His Majesty the Kaiser has watched with anxiety the attachment that has culminated so happily this day, and in his name I earnestly invoke the blessing

of Almighty God upon the union. From now onwards let us hear no more talk of wars and hatred, let us cast aside the brazen trumpetings of Mars and take up the sickle of everlasting Peace and good-fellowship. Our destinies are irrevocably united by bonds of blood-kinship that defy severance, our ends are pacific and point towards a joint commercial opulence without thought of territorial aggrandisement. Why, we have asked ourselves, do our dear brothers in England see a menace in the construction of a German Navy? And my reply is that, as a nation, you do not grudge us our sea-power,—that the fault for all the past bad thoughts may be brought home to the irresponsible and quite fallacious newspaper articles and sporadic speeches of rash people, published both here and in our own country. The result has been a vague irritation on both sides of the water; which apparently fostered with care by those whose interests it is to excite that kind of emotion. Let us be done with such ideas, once and for all. Our Navy is a menace to no one who holds up no menace to us; but to Germany a powerful Navy is as essential as a great army. From his mother's side a drop of sea-blood flows in the Imperial veins. When His Majesty came to the Throne after his grandfather's Titanic age, he swore the oath of a soldier that he would do his utmost to keep the bayonet and cannon at rest, but he swore also that the bayonet must be kept sharp, the cannon loaded, and both in working order, so that neither jealousy or envy looking askance at us from without might disturb us in the cultivation of our garden and in the decoration of our beautiful house. He is not warlike; he is essentially a man of peace. Upon the ground of the experience which history had taught him, His Majesty pledged himself never to strive for empty world

dominion. For what has become of those who waded through gore to a victor's throne! Alexander the Great, Napoleon the First, all the great heroes of war, swam in blood; and they left behind them nations bowed beneath the yoke which rebelled again at the first opportunity and brought these empires crumbling to their fall. The world-wide empire of which we in Germany have dreamed, is characterised by this, that above all, the newly created German Empire is to enjoy the most absolute confidence on every side as a quiet, honest and peaceful neighbour. If ever history should come to speak of a German world-wide Empire, or of a world-wide dominion of the Hohenzollerns, this empire, this dominion, is to be founded upon conquests gained not by the sword but by the mutual confidence of those nations which press towards the same goal. Let this marriage to-day be one further step in uniting our two great nations to one common bond, and in pursuance of the same course, a universal peace. I thank the Great Deity, at whose Throne I worship, for this memorable occasion, and tender a vast mede of gratitude to your illustrious Sovereign; lastly I wave my glass to one of Germany's dearest daughters, Alexandra, and to her husband, a Prince we love. Hoch! Hoch!! Hoch!!!"

CHAPTER IV.

"A Small Cloud—."

About seven miles from the grand old town of Gotha, buried deep amid the pleasant groves of the lovely Thuringen Wald, is a squat, grey-stone castle. It is not conspicuous from any point, but lies hidden there, resting upon a verdant plateau, with surroundings more charming than the imagination can well paint. In front, a long lake, its waters, where left clear by the blossoming regia, a shimmering mirror to the dark firs, mighty oaks and autumn tinted copper beeches; behind, a bank of impenetrable forest, the obvious depth of wood lending a darker hue to the wondrous green of the trees. The castle, solemn and bleak, straggled some four hundred feet along the translucent borders of the lake, and at either end a truncated tower terminating in the true Teutonic spire, gave an air of mystery to the historic building. Still, it was a fine house, and the most casual observer would remark many signs of modern comfort, betokening nothing old-world within the ancient walls. The great archway, leading to a central court, was supported upon either side by a great electric globe, and green slattern shutters lay back brightly from the two tiers of narrow windows. Festooned curtains fluttered gently behind the open panes and above all, crowning the westernmost turret, fluttered the royal ensign of Germany, the flagstaff rocking to the wayward flaps of the heavy bunting. The grounds, too, were well tended, and flowered borders gave colour against the yellow gravel or sombre stone colonnades, whilst busy gardeners

laden with trowel and hoe, or trundling prehistoric barrows, lent an air of bustle by no means unpleasant.

And this had all been effected in the space of a few weeks,—for the castle was an Emperor's wedding gift.

Voices came floating over the water, and the square prow of a punt swung lazily beneath one of the picturesque flanking bridges. In it were two young people, the one a girl dressed in a white summer gown, the other a flannelled youth, lazily reclining on a mound of soft cushions and driving his craft at snail pace through the tideless water.

The girl was dipping her fingers in the ripples and trickling the drops on her companion's face, laughing gaily at his vain endeavours to avoid the damp offerings. At last he drew a cushion down tightly over his head, and in a stifled voice cried out,

"That settles you, Xandra."

"Oh, you poor old thing," she replied teasingly, and then, with a movement exquisitely tender, she removed the cushion and kissed his forehead.

"Oscar," said a soft flute-like voice, "I wouldn't annoy you for all the kingdoms of the world."

For two minutes they peered into each other's eyes, each reading the other's thoughts, each far from the world of which they formed a part.

The Princess looked away suddenly and began to fold tucks in her delicate muslin skirt with restless, busy fingers.

"Did you ever guess, Oscar, that before we were married I—I—" She looked down at him imploringly.

"You hated me, Xandra?" he asked, searching the sweet girlish face for her answer ere her lips could frame it. "Did you ever guess that I—I nearly hated you? Forgive me for the blind fool that I was! Now—ah,

Xandra, you don't know how I thank God for that glorious day at Windsor, because I love—*love*—you, sweetheart, as I never thought to love a woman."

He kissed her hand in a transport of rapture, but she drew away from him, half in shyness, half in coquetry.

"Someone may see you," she murmured; "and how dreadful that would be, dear——"

"Say it, Xandra! 'Dear——'?"

"Husband," she whispered with cheeks aflame.

"Princess mine—and wife o' mine!"

The punt glided lazily on and the Princess Alexandra spread her long slender fingers wide and let the water ripple through them. As they floated onward the nose of the punt was brought up sharply against an overhanging branch and Prince Oscar lay back with a sigh of contentment.

"I'm tired of paddling, so we'll leave the punt to do what it likes. And besides, I want to talk—of—of many things, Xandra! Of you and myself and—love! . . . Little sweetheart, did you know what love was—how sweet, how altogether splendid? So splendid, dear, that if all the rest of the world were swept away and only you and I were left, I should have to be glad, Xandra, because nothing could ever rob me of a moment's loving!"

The girl's eyes were misty with strange, new emotions; her breath fluttered between her slightly parted lips; her heart beat warm and fast. How could she know what love was—ere her Prince came with Love's sweet message throbbing in his breast?

"You taught me all I know and all I wish to know of love," she answered, and her voice floated on the mellow air like a light wind whispering through the reeds.

He reached out towards her and took possession of a hand, and for five minutes they were silent.

A miraculous change had taken place in the relations of these two young lives. Starting from the altar with a determination to make the best of things, though convinced of mutual dislike, they had speedily discovered good points in each other, and three days together had sealed a bond of lasting friendship that was shortly to develop an equally lasting love. Princess Alexandra had at once found out how much of the scandal surrounding her husband bore any semblance of truth. He was not a drunkard,—far from it, being rarely known to touch intoxicating liquors. True, he had been as other young men at Bonn when it came to affairs of the heart, but, after all, these things can readily become of the past, done with and forgotten. Curiously enough, he also possessed two complete ears,—the scar which had been exaggerated into the loss of half of one, having healed completely and invisibly,—moreover the “red scar from his nose to his right ear” proved, on closer inspection, to be a scarcely visible pucker on the upper lip; certainly no one could call it in any way disfiguring. And he rode straight and hard as any of her English friends, could take his right and left amongst the birds against anyone, played a strong game of tennis, spoke perfect English, was an earnest, intelligent naval officer, devoted to his work,—and, finally, a good all round sportsman. Having disposed of his physical blemishes to her entire satisfaction, the Princess had searched for blots in his nature,—but found him willing to please, listen, and help, devoted and thoughtful. What more could she want. And from the bud of satisfaction at this discovery there blossomed a growing admiration until at last, blushing as she recalled her former state-

ment upon the same subject, she was forced to admit he was, looked at from every point of view,—a man. And he, also, had been pleasantly disillusioned. Instead of a slow, lumpy girl, as report had painted her, he found a fresh, energetic young maid, sweet-natured and loving, and he fell captive to her many charms long before even she had overcome the wrong impressions she had formed of him.

Presently the conversation had drifted to the day of their wedding.

"Prince Von Bülow must have been mad at his reception, dear," she said, recalling the silence which had greeted the Imperial representative. "I can't understand why he was so good-humoured about it. It was awfully sweet of him to take it like that."

Her husband thought a minute or two before replying.

"Do you know, Xandra, I don't quite fathom the Prince. He's had something on his mind lately that's been troubling him, and I can't help connecting it with that unfortunate incident at Windsor. He has a big idea of what is due to the representative of the Emperor of Germany, dear, and I can scarcely understand his quiet attitude that day. Since being appointed Regent, von Bülow has been a different man. I do hope he'll do nothing rash before father's return from Spa or at least until my eldest brother gets back to take over temporarily the reins of government."

"You don't anticipate trouble, sweetheart?" asked the Princess, anxiously scanning his face.

"No-o-o," he replied slowly, "but—"

"'But' what, dear?" she queried.

"Just 'but,'" he concluded smilingly. "Come, we had better make for home, I think. It's getting too chilly for you out here in that flimsy dress, dear"; and

suiting the action to the word, he swung the long punt round and drove it with strong sweeps of his paddle towards the little Gothic boathouse behind the bridge.

So far their married life had been a perfect Eden, and each day opened for them a further spell of happiness. Friends came from all around and in that quiet corner much of the hated social etiquette of the German Court was flung aside. Princess Alexandra soon made friends, and was pleased to know Countess Zlingenbosch and Herr Schmidt, glad to be on terms of intimacy with that great middle-class so long barred to her in England. She often wondered what her mother would think of her greatest friend, Frau Hecklestein, the young wife of a wealthy Berlin merchant, who owned a neighbouring Schloss. It was a pleasant change from the maddening servility to which she had been accustomed, and the tenants of their estate about the castle adored their young mistress and master much as the folks of Sandringham worship His Majesty King Edward VII.

Then, too, her trips into Gotha! With her husband she would motor over to the old town and do her shopping, and once even bought some apples in the cobbled market-place, bringing down showers of blessing upon her head from the aged sales-woman behind the stall. Once she had to pay a state visit to the young Grand-Duke and his wife, up at the great barrack-like Palace, and found in her cousin,—for the Grand-Duke was closely related, though she had not met him since his Eton days,—a cheery companion, more English than German and retaining ever a yearning for the land of his birth.

For several weeks this round of quiet pleasure had continued uninterruptedly, and then one morning a letter, bearing the Chancellory initials, arrived by special

messenger for her husband. Prince Oscar opened it and, as he read, his face went white with apprehension and repressed excitement. It was a direct command from the Chancellor to hold himself in readiness for active service afloat, and though, as a true sailor, nothing could have pleased him more, it meant leaving his wife, his Alexandra,—and until that moment he did not guess how very dear to him she had become. But the letter said more ; it said that the Chancellor was desirous of holding certain confidential meetings for the discussion of matters of state and, after mature consideration, had decided that their castle would be the most suitable place in which to hold them. Furthermore, that two days from the receipt of the letter, the Court chamberlain would come down to aid him in making preparations for the visit of a considerable party.

He felt aggrieved that he should not have been asked whether it would be convenient or not, but, having been brought up in a very strict school, to have a command was equal to immediate fulfilment. So he went in search of his young wife, and whilst withholding his inmost suspicions from her, told her who was coming to visit them. She seemed no more pleased at the prospect than he.

" Its too mean of him, dear, to pitch on us, above all people. Just think we have only been married seven weeks and then I am expected to play hostess to half the famous men in Germany. He might just as well have gone to Fritz, who has a far bigger castle," she said complainingly.

" I know, dear girl, but you may be sure he has some very good motive in coming here. Think for a minute how we are situated ; he can spread a report that he is going shooting in the Thüringen Wald, and what more

natural than that he should stay with us. People won't ask questions and any meetings he may wish to hold will take place here in absolute privacy. From the Imperial point of view, his decision is a very wise one," then seeing tears starting to her eyes, he changed his manner abruptly, and became the sympathetic husband, "Cheer up, sweetheart, I had no desire to upset you, dear. I'm afraid I took rather too practical a view of things, and did not see matters in your light, Xandra."

She smiled up at him and placed a hand lovingly on his arm.

"You dear old boy, I know you could not say anything to displease me if you tried. But you know, dear, it was rather sudden, and—and somehow I feel there is more behind it. What else does he say, Oscar?"

The Prince started as he recalled his orders to him to hold himself in readiness for active service if called upon, and wondered how much of this he might tell his wife. For he never forgot that she was English, and thought and dreamt English—and, moreover, suspected the Chancellor of having designs against her native land. However, he decided he must trust her,—and why not? After all, it did not necessarily mean there was about to be war with any country, and he, since his marriage, had none but thoughts of friendship towards the land that had given him so much happiness. Yet it seemed early to mobilize for the manœuvres,—they had been fixed for the autumn and it was but the beginning of April then.

"What will you say, Xandra, when I get my sailing orders?" he asked tentatively, patting her hand.

"I shall say that the Admiralty officials are pigs," she answered deliberately, "and I shall be as rude as I can to the Prince next time I see him."

"But, dear, you cannot expect me to give up the service completely, can you? After all, something is expected of me by the country. That is one of the penalties of being of royal blood you know, Xandra."

"I suppose so, Oscar," she sighed, "but it would be very mean of them."

"Well, dearie, Prince von Bülow writes in this letter that I am to keep myself in readiness for going on active service at any moment, and that may mean tomorrow, or in a month's time."

A distressed little "Oh"—and a flood of tears, was the only answer he received and he spent some minutes in comforting her. But he felt relieved now that she knew the worst,—it was a little load off his mind.

In England the furore caused by the unexpected outburst of bad feeling on the occasion of the wedding had died away; Princess Alexandra's mother, knowing the state of mind with which she had entered upon her married life, took much consolation from the letters she received telling of the affection that had sprung up between the two young people; and the Lady Millicent, now the Countess of Lynton (her husband, Lord Ronald, having lately succeeded his father) was overjoyed at the transformation, and was arranging a visit to her old time friend and companion. More pleasant still, from the point of view of the Foreign Minister, was the change that had taken place in the attitude of the people towards Germany. The marriage seemed to have effected all that had been desired, and the friendliest expressions of feeling towards the Germans were to be heard on every side. The Press had right nobly backed up the efforts of the Ministers towards a lasting peace, and the "Times," grim thunderer of many an age, cast

vacant hints at a possible Anglo-German Rapprochement on the lines of the Entente-Cordiale with France, created in 1905.

Preparations were begun for the reception of the Mikado, which was to be marked by a tribute of sea-power such as the coming of no other monarch had invoked. All the ships of the Atlantic and Home Fleets with their attendant cruiser squadrons were to be concentrated in the Solent, and with them all such Reserve forces as could be manned. Sixty, if not more, ships of Britain's only line of defence would for several days be anchored in vast lines between the Island of Wight and the mainland, and down these steelen lanes, the two Emperors of the East and West would steam in solemn procession. On June 7th would it begin,—a Monday morning,—and not until the bells of the Sabbath following was there to be any talk of dispersal.

CHAPTER V.

What Princess Alexandra Heard.

Again we see gaily bedecked streets, again an old-world town made gaudy with a thousand tints,—yet this time the plaudits of the awaiting crowd clashed forth in sonorous concord as the Regent of all Germany, with his distinguished companions, appeared at the portico of Gotha Station. Purple trimmed red baize, a very blaze of scarlet, stretched from the door to the pavement, where a magnificent motor-car, canopied and bearing the Royal Arms, shook 'neath the spasmodic bursts of energy given out by the expectant engines. Cheer on cheer rose from the dense lines of patriotic Teutons, and, bringing their heels together in military fashion, the Chancellor and Prince Henry saluted in acknowledgment the tribute of the people's affection.

A snort, a great rasping tear as the clutch was let in, and the car glided silently forth on its journey to the Schloss. With the Chancellor went von Tirpitz and Prince Henry of Prussia, and perhaps these two took some appreciable portion of the vociferous welcome to themselves. They were followed by other cars bearing over a score of officers, mostly naval, and lastly a great waggon laboured behind, borne down beneath the baggage belonging to each member of the party.

The Chancellor-Regent smiled broadly as he saluted the intermittent cheers, first to the one side and then to the other. He, though a vain man, was glad of this proof of the people's loyalty, and shewed his gladness openly.

"Very satisfactory, that," he remarked to his companions, as they drew out of the town on to the long, dusty, poplar bordered road leading to the Schloss.

"Von Bülow," commented Prince Henry, "I do not exaggerate when I say that His Majesty's popularity has never been greater than at this present time. They would do His Majesty's slightest behest and be proud to have so experienced and talented a leader in any enterprise, however daring."

"Really, Your Royal Highness," said von Bülow, with some little gratification and no inconsiderable amount of pride, "well, perhaps you are right, sir. He has, indeed, tried to be a father to our people and they are not unappreciative of such efforts. They shall soon have an opportunity of proving their faith in their sovereign, sir—but how soon they scarcely realize. We circularized the British Press of course,—hunting party—plenty of boars in the neighbourhood, and so on. Ah! here we are," and the car, amidst further enthusiastic demonstrations, turned in at the Park Gates.

Prince and Princess Oscar received their distinguished guests with a show of pleasure that did credit to their powers of dissimulation. The court chamberlain had already made all such arrangements as he had considered essential, and the settling down to the new surroundings was not therefore a matter of much difficulty. That the *raison d'être* of the visit was not for a moment to be lost sight of was made plain when, after dinner, the Chancellor and chief officers retired into the selected apartment for the first discussion of the subject that had necessitated the meeting. And with them went Prince Oscar.

From that time on, for three or four days, the young Prince became more and more reserved in his manner,

and the Princess, quick in perception, taxed him with holding some unwholesome secret and pressed him to make her his confidante. Alas! he could but reply that such things as his father's representatives and he discussed in private were not for women's ears; but her loving heart guessed well that the matter touched her more nearly, as an Englishwoman, than they would have cared to confess.

One day, as she was passing the door of the conference chamber, it was flung open and a naval captain, acting as secretary, came out. Through the open door a loud voice, raised in anger, sounded:

" . . . not to give England any warning? I call it . . . " and the door closed again, shutting from her ears the closing words of her husband; for she had recognised his voice, speaking in evident protest—against what or whom she could only guess.

From that hour she ceased worrying her husband, knowing full well that his honour depended on the maintenance of silence as regards the secret locked in his breast.

But one idea possessed her soul to the exclusion of all other thoughts,—she must warn England, her England, that danger, some inconceivable, awful danger threatened the British Empire.

All that was English in her rose up in revolt against the treachery she could not but impute to the Imperial Chancellor, and though desirous of avoiding any active part in international politics, recognising the folly of such interference from one in her position, the thought that her native land might be devastated by the underhand designs and specious cunning of her adopted country, made it essential that she should in some way warn it of its danger.

Calmer consideration caused her to realize how slight was the evidence upon which she based her fears. She herself might feel convinced that treachery was intended,—but would hard-headed, common sense Englishmen credit it? Impossible—she felt it to be impossible—but beneath this feeling lay that subtle womanly instinct which spelt danger clearer than written words.

She would try to learn more!

She, a Princess of Royal Blood, to spy? For a moment the very idea stupefied her, appalled her inborn sense of honour. Yet, were they honourable in their designs? Surely if they were plotting to bring about the downfall of her dear native-land, she would be justified in the use of any means whatsoever to circumvent them. Her mind was made up, and next day, when the heavy curtains of the assembly room had been flung aside to let in the bright morning sun and the fresh, perfume laden breeze, she strolled into the apartment and busied herself with arranging the blotters, pens and other impedimenta on the table. But though she had often attended to this herself, she had never shown the vivid interest she now displayed in the room itself.

A great oak-panelled hall, it had never been put to general use, and only once prior to the visit of her guests had she been inside. Three wide French windows gave access to a low balcony, raised on stakes a foot perhaps from the ground outside. Here the Moat made a détour, and a small pleasance, profusely planted with trellised roses and jasmine, filled the irregular grass-covered patch between the castle and the water's edge. Heavy curtains of green plush hung in festoons from the massive carved-oak canopies and between them and the window would be space for many persons. But there the risk would be too great,—and moreover it would be

an act of considerable difficulty to secrete herself just before the meeting, and to remain hidden without her prolonged absence during the sitting being noticed.

There were three doors, one at either end, and the other, double, with handsomely painted panels, leading into the main hall. The smaller doors gave entrance to a smoking room on the one side and a little ante-room on the other, but only from the former was there a separate exit. So she decided she must listen from the smoking room.

No sooner had she made up her mind than the fear of the consequences in the event of discovery came upon her with renewed force. She pictured herself, a Princess, arraigned before the stern Chancellor and his equally stern councillors,—and for a moment hesitated in her determination. But against these thoughts rose visions of England being trodden ruthlessly beneath the foot of a foreign invader, of English homes destroyed and farms devastated, of English families mourning the loss of dear ones shot down in defending of their all, and more than their all. And as these visions came and went, and came yet again more and more vividly, Princess Alexandra clenched her delicate hands and set her teeth.

That evening, when the heavy doors had finally closed upon Von Bülow and his officers, and she knew they were met for at the least two hours, she crept fearfully into the little lounge ; the sudden change to the smoky atmosphere caught her throat and she suppressed a cough with an obvious effort. Then, leaving the light full on, and the door ajar, she sat back in a deep padded leather chair and glanced, unseeing, through an English illustrated journal. A confused murmur of voices came from the next room, and, steeling herself to the task,

she crouched shivering against the intervening door and applied her ear to the key-hole. Ah! the ignominy of it,—she shuddered and twice whispered “And to think I am a Princess!”—as much to assure herself that it was no dream, as in horror at the bare idea of her action.

A confused babble of voices was all that came to her for some minutes; then, a sharp rapping on the table, and the commanding voice she knew so well, burst clear above the others, silencing them by its authority.

“Gentlemen, I beg your attention, please. We have much work to do. First I wish to ask His Royal Highness a question. Prince Oscar, for two days your dear wife has been strangely subdued; now, sir, tell us on your honour, have you told her one word of what has passed between these four walls?”

“Before God, sir, I have not mentioned the subject; and I will swear that she has no knowledge of it. Her manner, sir, may perhaps be explained when I mention the strain that the part of hostess entails upon one unaccustomed to it,—though gentlemen,” and he turned to the officers about him, “do not think we are not pleased to have you with us. We appreciate fully the honour; but you will all understand the position, I feel assured.”

“Well spoken,” broke in Prince Henry of Prussia, beaming with kindness, “we perfectly comprehend your difficulty and accept your explanation. Dear Alexandra is but a girl, and despite the chamberlains and stewards, she naturally feels that a large share of the responsibility falls upon her young shoulders. And now to work. Will you, Tirpitz, now that we have disposed of the military problem, state your case for the Navy. Mind, it is essential that you should have an immediate success if we are to bring our scheme to a

satisfactory conclusion. As I understand you, it is proposed to have our entire fleet collected at Wilhelms-haven on or about the same date that our English friends commence their Review?"

"With your consent, yes, sir."

"And the distance to Portsmouth?" queried the Sailor Prince.

"Four hundred and forty nautical miles, sir."

"How long would it take, and how could so great a body of vessels accomplish it unseen, my friend?"

"To Dover, sir, they would steam at fifteen knots and thence the remaining hundred and ten miles at twenty knots, taking thus twenty-seven hours and a half to cover the entire distance. The cables out of Germany would all be under supervision twelve hours previous to a start being made, which would be about midnight. They would pass Dover Straits at ten o'clock the following evening and reach the Isle of Wight in the early morning of the day after. Does the programme gain this assembly's approval?"

"As far as we have understood it,—yes," said von Below, "but certain little points require elucidating, Tirpitz. For instance, say you are sighted by any ship flying the British flag?"

"That contingency is fully provided for, sir. We should sink her there and then, for hesitancy on such a point could only mean disaster to our plans. I admit it is a drastic measure to adopt, but after much thought I venture to solicit your consent to that method of procedure."

"Certainly, my dear Tirpitz, certainly. War can never be nice—that we fully realize; and the more bloody it is the sooner it will be over. Now let us fully understand you. You anticipate that nearly four score of their finest

ships will lie anchored off Spithead and you already have their names and positions, as at present arranged. Each division of our boats will be given a certain task to perform, and the officers who fails is to be considered in disgrace,—is that it? Very well, then. Now you have fifty-nine destroyers, and fifty-three torpedo boats,—how many torpedo tubes does that mean?"

"We propose employing only forty-five boats of each class, sir, which would give us a grand total of two hundred and seventy tubes,—that is if we employ none but three-tube boats. We may, of course, have half a dozen with four tubes, similar to Nos. S76 to S81—in which event I have underestimated the number of tubes. However, that will allow a very considerable margin for emergencies, for even should they have ninety large vessels it would mean three torpedoes apiece. Moreover, it will not leave us absolutely without torpedo craft at home, for we should have no less than twenty-two in reserve. As a convoy I would suggest the new armoured cruiser "Gneisenau" and one of the "Roon" class, these being well suited to running down and sinking a liner should such prove necessary. Furthermore, each commander will be given a duplicate set of instructions, to be opened only when the Straits of Dover are astern. Any British cruiser or destroyer would be promptly sunk, at whatever cost,—for it would be worse than disastrous to resort to half measures."

The Chancellor stopped him, and reaching across the table put his hand on that of Tirpitz, saying

"That will do, my friend, that will do. I perceive you have forgotten nothing and we can entrust the final preparations to you in the full confidence that you will carry them through to the end in a manner creditable to your nation and your sovereign. Let me add, a

communication just received from His Majesty, whilst reporting a further increase in his strength, gives me full authority to deal with this matter in the way we think best. As he remarks, the insults offered our national honour can be wiped out only in blood." Having said this, a deliberate invention, von Bülow concluded, "Now, gentlemen, before we part for the last time, the secretary shall read the summary of the arrangements, and the manner in which we propose to carry them into effect."

Princess Alexandra waited to hear no more. She slid silently, horror stricken, from the room. Could she have heard aright, she wondered? and for some minutes she pinched herself, read half a page of a book, looked into a looking glass and did many other things to assure herself that she was in no trance, no hideous dream. How her anger rose at the calm, cruel, measured tones of the Chancellor—she could not believe her father-in-law had really sanctioned so vile a proposal; ugh! the very thought of it made her feel dizzy. And yet, if she were desirous of aiding her mother-land, she must pull herself together and act,—act.

Up she flew to her room,—three minutes before the glass, a touch of the lovely hair here and there, one soft rub with powdered paper and she was herself again. Reason had reasserted itself, and she determined to face the issue calmly. She remembered that in her last letter Lady Millicent, Countess of Lynton, had invited her to come over and stay with them, and she had replied by extending her own invitation to them to visit the Schloss. She would ask to take a trip with her husband to England,—at the most, she could only be refused.

And next day it was a subject for remark that Princess Alexandra had recovered her lost spirits. Laughter and jest leapt from her smiling lips and the stern, unbending

councillors entered for once into the general gaiety. Indeed, the strain of the meetings, now finally terminated, had been very great,—necessitating a constant concentration of thought and a strenuous attention to detail. One error, and Germany would cease to exist as a great Power; perfect preparedness and she might become the ruling nation,—mistress of land and sea. At the breakfast table the Princess broached the subject of a visit to her native land.

Prince Henry frowned as she made the suggestion, especially as she had been careful to include her husband. After a moment's thought he answered her:

"Oscar is a sailor, my dear, and I fear is becoming a very lazy one; we had arranged that he should rejoin his ship next week and I regret we cannot see our way to cancelling the order. But I promise you you shall go to England before long," he said finally.

Princess Alexandra, true to her part, showed her keen disappointment in a flood of tears and silently left the table. Scarcely had the door closed than the Sailor-Prince turned to his nephew.

"Oscar, have you been putting these foolish ideas into Alexandra's head?"

"No, sir,—it is the first I have heard of her desire to go. I knew she had received an invitation from the Countess of Lynton, but understood she had refused and instead, had invited her and the Earl to stay with us."

"Umph! well, anyway you must knock that little desire on the head. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Prince, obediently.

Prince von Bülow, who was also present at the Royal table and had been listening attentively, here interposed a remark.

"May I venture to make a suggestion, your Royal Highness?"

"Certainly, Bülow,—what is it," said Prince Henry shortly; he disliked his decisions being questioned, even by the all-powerful Chancellor.

"It is that Her Highness be allowed to pay the visit by herself. We shall then have her,—if you will pardon my saying so, Prince Oscar,—out of the way."

The young Prince flushed up hotly in protest, but before he could utter a word his uncle, waving him to silence, answered:

"A very good suggestion, Bülow. We will act upon it. She shall leave for England on June the seventh, and the mere fact of her coming will do much to disarm suspicion, should such exist. Oscar, my lad, I feel for you and realize how deeply you love your dear wife, but remember this,—your country before everything. And moreover, should we succeed, as we have every reason to believe, there will be a crown for all of my Royal brother's sons somewhere. Never forget either—our future lies on the seas."

Prince Oscar nodded a silent assent to his uncle's wishes and quietly left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

The Coming of the Mikado.

On Saturday, June 5th, a huge crowd had congregated at an early hour along the wide, expansive Southsea esplanade. A Punch and Judy show squeaked its invitation for an audience on the grassy common at the back, and a cocoa-nut shy rose temptingly not far off. Yet by neither of these stood so much as a single patron.

All eyes were towards the sea,—for the Mikado was coming that day and his fleet had been signalled from Selsea Bill!

The myriad yachts flew each a small ensign symbolical of the Rising Sun; even the Solent passenger steamers were gaily strung with bunting amongst which the Japanese ensign was the predominant feature. Hawkers made great trade along the stony beach with slum-made Japanese wares,—dolls, glazed paper flags, cabinets, rough-carved but quaint, ornate fans of every hue and design, even wooden chop-sticks with painted handles.

Of a sudden, a confused murmur passed down the line. Someone on Southsea Castle had seen the ships through a telescope.

As one, the dense mass directed its gaze towards the south-east and stared expectant across the calm, shimmering ocean.

As one, they saw and remarked on the growing columns of smoke rising behind the chess-board painted forts.

As one, they shouted "There they are," and stood on tiptoe to score if possible the small advantage of an additional inch.

An intense hush followed, a breathless excited hush, as the huge grey hulls gained momentarily in size. Fifteen minutes passed and the leading ship, followed by all, swung boldly into the buoyed channel, conned by deft pilots sent before to meet them.

Closer still, and the long lines of white-garbed sailors could be picked out manning ship. A wisp of feathery steam started from behind the foremost funnel and immediately the hoarse, piercing cry of a syren rent the air.

A gun crashed noisily somewhere to the right.

"Lord, ain't that stirring," came a loud cockney voice, full of conviction, then,

"Come along, boys, give 'em a cheer,—Hurrah!"

Hurrah!! Hurra-a-a-ah!!!

An immense volume of sound spread out to meet the incoming ships, and over in the Wight they caught that tumultuous cheering, and from Sea-View and Ryde cast forth an answering echo. As the second gun broke rolling in a thunderous welcome, a huge Imperial Standard of Japan cracked briskly out from the steelen main-mast of the flagship.

"And hurrah!! yelled the crowd, and yet again a vast Hurrah!!!

"What name did yer sye, mate?" asked a marine of a sailor friend, shouting his question into his very ear to gain a hearing above the all pervading turmoil.

"'Kashima' the fust one, and 'Katori' the second, but I can't size up the third hooker, though I 'ave 'eard say as it was took from the Rooshans."

Hurrah!! Hurra-a-ah!!! no cessation, not a moment's quiet,—the Japs do not come every day, so Hurrah!!!!

And in Jove-like response the cannon of Nippon

bellowed a mighty salvo, flash on flash and crash on crash,—Gad! to have lived only to see that sight!

How they cheered, those men of England! what a greeting to the Islanders of the distant East!

And no mean force had they with them either. Foremost steamed the giants "Kashima" and "Katori," Elswick and Vickers built and found, mighty in peace but mightier still in action. Next sped a smaller craft, yet very powerful. Vast turrets, bristling with guns, leaned steeply on her glistening sides. Under the name "Poltava" she had fought many a battle, aye! and been in the thickest as painted scars yet showed. Sunk at Port Arthur in ignominy, the little yellow men had raised her in a record time and, ticketed as the "Tango," she held rank with many monsters of a more recent date. Then came four cruisers, three thick clad with armoured walls, all historic as none others can be. "Iwate" was the first and in her wake steamed "Idzumo," sister terrors of a score of fights, built, as their greater brethren, in the yards of Elswick. Three huge funnels had they, and the gaunt length of menacing eight inchers stuck rudely out before and behind. A smaller one the third, made famous as the "Bayan"; four-funnelled and ship-shape, the new-named "Aso" held the gaze of all—and rightly too. The deck protected "Soya" showed no traces of her year's immersion in Chemulpo Bay where, under Russian flag and name of "Variag," she had been sunk subsequent to the action with the brave Uriu, one of Togo's foremost admirals.

Of the rest, though interesting, why say much? The "Niitaka" and "Tsushima," smaller cruisers that had each played an ever to be remembered part, sat lightly on the wave. The "Akashi" and "Suma," Japan-built and thought out, snorted fussily after their leaders, and received an ovation as enthusiastic as the ones before.

Hurrah! rose the cry,—Hurrah!! a thousand times.

Japan had sent her naval visiting card to England and we were proud and glad to receive a manifestation at once so grand and so powerful. All that day and on the Sunday, too, vessels came in from far distant parts and took their appointed places in preparation for the great review.

Had not the King himself come down to Portsmouth to greet the Mikado? Had not column on column of description been devoted to that great meeting of the Sea-Kings on the deck of the "Kashima"? No such event had ever yet been chronicled in history, and Europe must quail and shake at this manifestation of an all-powerful naval strength. Vested in those two men lay the peace of the entire world, ensured by a naval force that, combined, might sweep the four seas; and land-forces, trained in war, that had scorned the frown of the Russian Bear and driven it snarling and furless back to its mid-Europe fastnesses.

Never had triumph been so great, never nation so stirred as by the coming of the little "Yellow King,"—and many times did this term affectionately appear in the papers.

The special saloon, drawn by a huge locomotive bearing on its front a painted red and white sun, accomplished its record run to Waterloo Junction between almost unbroken lines of vociferously cheering people,—and proud were those to whom the Mikado had vouchsafed so much as a peep at his dusky royal features. From the station to the Palace, by way of Trafalgar Square and the grand new Avenue, now to be seen to the very best advantage, the continuous uproar of welcome echoed down street and square. Not one discordant note broke the pleasant symphony, and many

there are who believe the Mikado really said to our most Gracious Majesty as an enterprising evening paper assured its readers he had done:

"Sire, with such a people, I cease to wonder at the greatness of the British Empire."

That evening London went mad. Look where you would, it seemed impossible to dis-associate the mind from Japan and things Japanese. Many scores, nay hundreds of young men, students from the hospitals or technical schools, clerks, engineers and what not, raced madly here and there clad in hastily invented Kimonos; in their hands were Japanese flags, and crackers spitting a cheeky fire of sparks on all and sundry. Tea-shop maidens and typewriters joined in the fun, and good-fellowship between the sexes knew no restraint,—perhaps, indeed, it led to an overstepping of the bounds of strict propriety; yet even the severe magistrates on the Monday morning showed a praiseworthy desire to forget and forgive.

Round Trafalgar Square surged an immense crowd and from the four lion-mounted plinths, loud-voiced orators yelled impassioned words and raised to boiling point the over-heated enthusiasm of their listeners. Paper boys did business hitherto unknown and had no need of cries to sell their wares,—yet still, to the manner born, they shouted the news at the tops of their shrill trebles.

"Paiper! 'Evenen' Noos,' 'Globe,' or 'Storr,'—Grite welcum to the Me-kaa-dow! Orl the Winners!!"

"'Ere y're, sir! lite edition of the 'Globe,' speshul wires from Portsmarth, and hall arraingemints for the grite revoo,—thank e', sir, kindly. Lor' Bill,—that bloke give me a tanner and don't want no chinge,—'ooray, fer Japan, I says."

And many similar remarks were to be heard. Money seemed to count as nought, those that had, giving, and those that had not, receiving unhesitatingly for amounts. Masters jostled their office boys and spoke to them cheerily, costers (full-bebuttoned) nudged sleek frock-coated club-men and had jest returned for jest,—all was topsy-turvy, all gaiety, all turmoil. Two Japanese students, come out to see a nation gone crazy in welcome to their king, were seized and borne shoulder-high to a statue base and not allowed to descend until each had said something,—or seemed to have said something, since no sound less than a bomb-explosion could have battaled that inferno of human noise.

In Piccadilly certain mondaines enhanced their evil reputations by appearing dressed as Geishas, and bore all outward resemblance to the inmates of the Eastern Yedo Yashiwara,—comb-filled shiny hair, fashioned in fantastic curves, bright hued kimonos held gracefully to the lines of the body by a thick-bound obi and obidome, and with natty kinchaku holding a scented handkerchief at their sides. Yet what awful mockery seemed the *coquetterie de vieillesse* thus adorned? Alas, the effect in London of the craze held bad points as well as good ones. These poor outcasts bore no real likeness to the fair women of far Japan, with their exquisite taste in greys, browns and other delicate and frequently lighter hues of silk and brocade, the faultless costume being matched by the coy and at the same time perfectly natural and simple manners and musical voices of the wearers. Absent, too, was that naiveté, that exquisite charm of comportment,—absent the light-hearted, irresponsible ripples of heaven-sent laughter, absent the modesty of address and the purity of thought.

Thus may we circle the lantern of life. There is the

light side and the dark side, and the twain must ever be the main contrasts of mortal existence.

And not until the early hours of the Sabbath, when the bell-ringers were stretching and gaping away the traces of their all too short repose, were the streets clear of the clamouring people. A hush at last fell and naught disturbed it but the metallic, measured tread of the night constables. London had had a full memorable fling and slept the better in consequence.

Sunday was June 6th!

CHAPTER VII.

The Hand of Fate.

There was more than the usual excitement amongst the passengers aboard the Belgian packet "Marie Henriette" as she sped at nearly twenty-two knots across the Channel on the morning of June 7th,—as bright a Monday as had ever initiated a fresh week. Princess Alexandra was with them, on her first visit to England since her marriage, and locked in her bosom lay the most terrible secret ever held by woman.

Outwardly calm, she rated the speed of the vessel as sluggish and looked anxiously ahead at the rising land, longing with an inexpressible longing to be once more on English soil,—and, above all things, to see her august uncle and unburden herself to him, for to him alone would she speak.

Little she attended the unctuous reception by an adoring people, little she noticed the fulsome compliments of the local Mayor who, berobed and chained, offered her a hearty welcome in the nation's name. She was all for pushing on and had no relief even when, on the arrival of her train in London, her mother held her clasped tightly and lovingly to her breast.

"My darling child, thank Heaven for this great joy! tell me, how has it been with you since you left, how is dear Oscar, and why this hasty decision to visit us?"

"Mother, oh! mother, take me to my uncle the King,—do, do—if you love me, take me to him!" were her answering words, and her astonished mother stood back aghast, wondering whether anything could have unhinged the fresh young mind.

"But, Xandra, you cannot mean it! He is presiding at a banquet at Buckingham Palace and to have an immediate audience of him is quite out of the question. Compose yourself, my daughter, and tell me of your trouble."

"Don't put me off, mother" she cried imploringly. "It is a matter for the King's ear only. Oh! Major Vere" she continued, turning to an equerry, "cannot you see I am in earnest? Believe me, the safety of England depends upon it and I dare not tell my secret to any but the King."

And so strongly did she plead and so sanely, that at last a motor was ordered and she and her mother driven off towards the Palace.

But the Goddess of Chance was fighting against England that day.

Down the great length of Pall Mall dashed the car, sharply spinning round past Marlborough House,—then away on the last short stretch towards the Palace. When not forty yards remained to be covered, a loud report rang out and the motor swerved giddily to the left and collided with great violence with an electric-arc standard.

A tyre had burst and taken the chauffeur utterly by surprise.

From all sides people came to render aid and willing hands lifted a fair young form tenderly from the ground and bore it gently to the Palace. The Duchess was merely badly shaken and walked, as in a dream, after her senseless daughter, leaving the injured chauffeur to the good services of the police.

That accident, trivial in itself, was to cost the lives of millions of human beings ere the many months had past.

Placed on a downy bed, amid surroundings of the greatest luxury lay the sole means of warning England

of such danger as she had never, until then, been called upon to face.

Hurried messengers had motored hot-haste to the Court Physicians and soon three kindly-faced men stood in consultation over the girl's apparently inanimate body.

"Tell me the worst, Sir Arthur,—please God I may have the strength to bear it," sobbed the mother, almost prostrated by grief.

"Madam" replied the doctor, "have no fear. Your daughter is not severely injured and within a few days will, I trust, be on her feet again. She has been shaken and bruised, but was rendered unconscious by a blow on the head. The trouble is slight, I assure your Highness."

"Thank Heaven for that," gratefully replied the mother, checking her heavy sobs, and looking wistfully at the tense white young face before her.

For long hours they watched thus and as each hour chimed from some near spire the anxiety deepened on the set face of the doctor, who, kept a lonely vigil, holding his patient's hand between his own. He had dismissed his colleagues and now almost regretted it. What should he say if the unexpected,—the worst—were to happen?

Bah! it could not be. With that strong young frame and healthy constitution, nature must win in the long run. Into the early hours of the next morning he watched and watched, and prayed too, but never a sign was vouchsafed him. At last, when hope had sunk to zero and he had almost given way to despair, a slight, almost inaudible sigh from the bed sent the blood tingling through his veins. He touched a button at his side and a muffled bell clicked once; a uniformed nurse crept in and approached him, and after a whispered word or two left the room as softly as she had entered.

Ten minutes elapsed and the door again opened. The Duchess entered, clad in a hastily donned tea-gown; behind her strode a fine, manly figure, bearded of feature, yet regal in bearing and carriage. The doctor leapt instantly to his feet.

It was His Majesty the King!

"Well, Sir Arthur, how is our little patient progressing," he whispered, as the great specialist moved to meet him.

"She is coming round fast, your Majesty, and as she had, I am told, been asking for you immediately prior to the accident, it is not unlikely the line of thought will follow in direct sequence and her first desire will be for you, sire. Therefore I dared to have you roused, and crave your forgiveness if I have done wrong."

"Indeed I expected to be sent for, Sir Arthur, but appreciate your thoughtfulness nevertheless. Sh—h—h, my little niece is coming round. See—her eyes are open."

The doctor returned to the bedside where the nurse was ministering to the girl, now momentarily recovering from the effects of the accident. He held a spoonful of weak spirit to her lips, and as she swallowed it a happy smile spread over her wan features.

Then she espied the King and made an obvious effort to speak to him.

"Not yet, dearie, not yet" said her mother soothingly. "Wait until to-morrow and you shall tell us everything."

But the Princess essayed to speak.

"The Germans" she began weakly, half rising in spite of all remonstrances. "Oh! uncle,—the—the—Germans—sending—torpedo boats—to—to" here her strength failed her and she fell back with a heavy sigh and lapsed into unconsciousness.

But it was not to Princess Oscar that the other occupants of the room turned,—it was to King Edward.

Her whispered words, enigmatical to the rest, burned deep into his very soul. He clutched Sir Arthur by the shoulder and repeating what the Princess had said inquired hoarsely.

“Did she say that? did she say that?”

A sudden fear had gripped him, and his heart became heavy as stone. He guessed intuitively what his niece had wished to convey and grew cold with horror as he thought of nearly his entire navy strung out at Spithead, an easy prey to a determined and vengeful foe.

“Sir Arthur,” he said excitedly, “when will the Princess recover consciousness again,—tell me, man, tell me? it is important.”

“Sire, it would be dangerous to disturb her now for several hours.”

The King, restraining himself with an effort and endeavouring to banish the awful thoughts that flew as phantoms across his mind, strode gently from the room and down a long corridor towards his private study. As he reached it a footman, still buttoning up his tunic and showing other evidence of hasty dressing, came towards him.

“Sire, an officer has important news for your Majesty alone,—he is below and waiting your Majesty’s pleasure. He is from the Admiralty and—and—sire, pardon sire if I have been presumptuous, but he said it is a matter of such importance, that your Majesty would forgive——”

“Send him up” broke in the King in a tense voice, waving the flunkey away; then to himself he said as he entered his room, “Heavens, what evil has this man to tell me now,—for evil I feel it must be.”

A loud knock at the door and a haggard officer almost

fell inside the room—moreover he sank prostrate into a chair without a word to his Royal host and fainted right away.

And as the King with his own hands poured out a strong glass of neat cognac, a clock outside struck five.

In three minutes the officer had recovered, and, flinging etiquette to the winds cried wildly,

"Your Majesty, the British Navy has been sunk at its moorings. Twenty minutes ago a wire came through from Portsmouth stating that our finest and latest ships and in addition most of the Japanese vessels, were torpedoed by swarms of strange craft coming in from every direction. Oh, my God! my God!" and burying his face in his hands, he burst into tears. For some few moments he swung backwards and forewards in uncontrollable grief, the King, thoughtful first of others as was his wont, patted him in a friendly, encouraging manner on the shoulder. Whilst he had been speaking the King had recognised him as Lord Bramham, a promising officer, naval secretary to the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, and a *persona grata* at Court. At first, so haggard did he look, it was difficult to recall his face.

"Come, come, Lord Bramham, things may not be as black as you have painted them; perhaps——"

The officer leapt to his feet and handed the King a duplicate message of that received. His Majesty read it in silence, and then casting his eyes to Heaven said earnestly:

"If this be war, then may the Great God whom I worship be with my country in her time of trouble."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Madness of Racial Hate.

In the great dining hall of the Kiel officer's naval-school, a body of perhaps ninety men sat expectant, their eyes fixed intently upon a certain door. All wore naval dress and all were clad in preparation for a long journey; no new uniforms were to be seen here, no spotless clothes,—all the kit of active service and nothing more.

For twenty minutes they waited and then footsteps clanked crisply without. In a body they rose to their feet and saluted—the Imperial Chancellor and Admiral Prince Henry of Prussia.

Clothed as an Admiral, stern and unbending, the Overlord of the German Fleet advanced to a little dais, behind which hung a rolled up plan or map. His right hand man, Admiral von Tirpitz, stood silent at his side and then he spoke, unrolling at the same time the plan,—a Chart of Portsmouth Harbour and the Solent.

“Officers of the German Imperial Navy.

“I stand here in the name of my Royal brother, the Kaiser, whose illness we all so deeply deplore. I stand here to exhort you as he would himself do.

“This day marks the turning point in the history of our glorious Empire, this day marks an epoch in the history of Europe.

“Our great land has risen in forty years from a state of mediocrity to one of weighty prominence in the world's international counsels; we have become a united nation, we have extended our boundaries, increased our

prestige, encouraged our army and, lastly, created our fleet. But in accomplishment of this our Divine Mission, we have had to face and overcome many an obstacle, many a seemingly dangerous stumbling-block,—yet have we done it, by the Grace of God.

"The time is come now, however, to move forward again; we cannot afford to mark time if we would win in the race of nations. We must advance. Gentlemen, we cannot advance further because England bars the way, England the tyrant, England the bully, England the hypocrite. For years a conflict between our great nation and the English has been considered inevitable and we have had to look forward to the extinguishing of our Imperial hopes in the near future; but chance has given us the opportunity we have so long desired.

"Gentlemen, when the Imperial Chancellor visited England for the marriage of my dear nephew he was received by those ill-bred people with jests and jeers, yet said nothing. But we have not forgotten,—we neither forget nor forgive. From that hour we have made it our pleasure to find a means whereby we might humble this arrogant race to the very dust, and now that means is at hand. We have them in the hollow of our palms. Shall we miss the opportunity?"

"No," came as one voice from the excited listeners.

"You are right, gentlemen, we must not do so. lulled into a feeling of absolute security, these modern Romans have collected in one vast fleet the bulk of their detestable Navy. Will you destroy that Navy?"

"Yes," they yelled in unison.

"Then, gentlemen, go forth and do so. Here are your instructions to each man a set, with a plan of the Review and position of every ship taking part therein. I give you all my blessing and salute you as brothers,—you are

setting out to work for the furtherance of a holy cause, a cause that will assuredly receive the sacred benediction of the Heavenly Being and which, if successful, will invoke the whole-hearted applause of the entire universe. I have said it."

It was the Madness of Racial Hate.

CHAPTER IX.

Treachery.

The Solent had never been so gay as on Monday morning, June 7th. A brilliant sun shone down upon a scene of terrible grandeur blending with iridescent gaiety. For there lay strung out in vast lines from one end of the narrow Gut to the other, the greatest fleet that ever sat the waves. Between the immense steel mastodons flitted a continuous stream of light-winged yachts, wafted over the short snowy billows by the warmest breath of an ideal summer's day; steadier rode the ungainly "hurrah" boats,—paddle-steamers plying for hire at a price for an "out and return" trip, and carrying a full-ripe cargo of joyous revellers who seized the slightest opportunity for giving vent to a thunderous cheer.

But it was upon the warships, that most attention was concentrated. Not until midday had all been collected from their various bases and been moored, stem to stern and at set distance apart, in long columns facing east and west. Four lines were there, and in them lay collected sixty-seven battleships and armoured cruisers, with over two score cruisers of the obsolescent protected type; and as though to form a tail, some eighty destroyers swung listless far into Southampton Water. The great "Dreadnought," toothed with long twelve inch guns and reckoned fit to meet alone any six ships of Europe's finest fighters, headed the nearer line, behind lay the "Lord Nelson" and "Agamemnon," two vast conceptions of Sir Philip Watts displacing near seventeen thousand tons all told, and yet not like the "Dread-

nought" in either power or weight. Twelve inchers they carried too, but not so many—and made up the lack by batteries of the irresistible 9.2 in. B.L., the bite of which forced cracks across the hardest cemented armour-plate. At least, so it was said.

And these three, with the eight 16,350 ton "King Edward VII" class, formed the Channel Fleet,—the mightiest arm ever swayed by a single Admiral.

Beyond the battleships were the vessels of the fifth cruiser squadron, twelve towering steel-clad walls. The gigantic trio, "Invincible," "Indomitable" and "Inflexible" rose high above the rest, 17,250 tons of mighty strength, speedy as the fastest scout, powerful to smite even as the Dreadnought. The "Minotaur," "Defence" and "Shannon" were all of 14,600 tons and on their trials had twirled the log to show a speed of over twenty-three knots. The remaining six formed a distinct class and foremost was the "Achilles"; menacing seven-point-fives hung far behind the beam, whilst fore and aft the solid 9.2 in. glared defiance at the admiring world. Nearly fourteen thousand tons were they, and thought of enough power to tackle and beat the individual warships of the Teuton. Next line along counted first the ship-shape Japs,—three fearsome battleships and three armoured cruisers,—behind, five smaller craft, unarmoured yet perky and full of fight. Then more great British ships,—the types spread out in, seemingly, great confusion. The third row held the Home Fleet, fourteen battleships as total; their faster brethren were represented by the first cruiser squadron, two "Drakes" of fourteen thousand tons and more, and six "improved" County class, so called. Fourthly, seven ships of the Reserve Fleets, battleships, cruiser scouts, gunboats, destroyers, submarines and indeed representatives of every class conceived during recent years.

Ah! what a display of power. With such a Navy was it not natural England should defy the world and dare their disagreement to her just behests. Fifty-five battleships were counted in the British Fleet and of these no less than thirty-seven (and the newest moreover) were there for all the world to see. Thirty-eight armoured cruisers were also completed and in commission, and of their number twenty-four were anchored with their greater kind. This Armada represented in money more than eighty millions sterling and carried the pride of Britain's naval forces. From every bow to top of each fore-mast, from thence to main-top and down again to the stern, fluttered rows of bunting,—all the signal flags and flags of many nations too. And each mast carried besides a huge ensign, one of the Rising Sun, one of the Union Jack, a token of that great bond of friendship cemented by a mutual respect and admiration.

From two o'clock on Monday afternoon until four-thirty, every ship was free to all and any; myriads came from far and near to see from close quarters what a warship meant. There on those spotless decks trod countless feet and o'er the hoots and cheers of passing vessels came the many dialects of the visitors, Yorkshire burring, Devonshire chanting and Scotch rasping—from every point of the compass, Wales, Ireland, aye! and farther afield still, for Canada and Australasia had sent their children there. The papers spoke of nothing else but the Review, the magazines gave articles only upon the Navy, and in the weekly journals countless pages were devoted to illustrations of the various ship-types represented there.

At Portsmouth and Southsea, rooms fetched as many pounds per day as formerly they had shillings, whilst the hotels were peopled with guests who had ordered

their accommodation many months in advance, fore-warned by naval relations of the certain rush. Special trains snorted into Portsmouth from London every few minutes, and day excursions at ruinous prices brought down and disgorged hundreds of thousands upon the already overburdened towns. Caterers made a rich harvest and good meals were at a premium. The Common resembled some gigantic bee-hive, and here were come together a crowd that would make the Hampstead Heath habitué green with envy. The boatmen were happy at last and for ten shillings lugged their heavy craft manfully out into the Sound to give their passengers some view of the great lines of battleships; as for the excursions steamers, the trippers waited thousands thick to get aboard them, and many hundred pounds were subsequently taken from captains who had broken the law of over-crowding.

No sign of danger here,—that was certain. Yet, a sign was given that very evening which, had it been rightly interpreted, might well have saved the entire British Navy from destruction. And this warning came in the later evening papers,—the following, culled from the "Globe," is a copy of it:—

"MYSTERIOUS FIRING HEARD OFF YARMOUTH."

"Captain Seth Williams of the Yarmouth smack "Eliza" reports having heard heavy and continuous firing between 2.15 and 3 p.m. coming from N.E. The day was beautifully clear and he tacked up in the direction whence the sound emanated. After a little over half an hour a dull sullen report was distinctly heard above the firing, which at once ceased. His mate who had climbed the mast, stated that he had seen a large

four funnelled cruiser hull-down on the horizon, seemingly making south. He was not close enough to distinguish what the vessel was doing or whether she flew the English flag. Seeing no further object in continuing on his outward course, Captain Williams made for Yarmouth."

Underneath was a little note to the effect that "inquiries at the Admiralty have elicited the information that the armoured cruiser "Euryalus" left Sheerness during the morning for speed trials, after repairs, in the North Sea. It is not improbable that, the trials proving satisfactory, the captain decided to carry out the quarterly prize firing, which would account for Captain William's story. We may remark, in passing, that the "Euryalus" has four funnels."—

No striking prominence was given to this paragraph, for, after all, it was but of the catch-penny, sensational type that is to be found almost daily in one or another organ of the Press. But taken in conjunction with a second paragraph it might have suggested something ominous to a close observer. The quotation of which the above is a copy, had appeared on page seven,—the chief news sheet, but on page nine a note called attention to the fact that "the passenger steamer 'Leopold II.' is two hours over-due, and knowing that she left Amsterdam punctually, considerable anxiety is felt by those who are expecting passengers by her. The Manager suggests a breakdown as the most reasonable explanation, since the sea is calm and the weather clear and fine; in his opinion there is no cause for anxiety whatever."

Yet who would connect the two occurrences? never had our foreign relations been more friendly, never had universal peace seemed so near realisation. That evening, as the sun sank, strings of electric lights set

every ship prominently in outline against the dark of night. Many vessels had arranged dances, and bands played gaily as satin slippers feet skipped daintily step for step with regulation patent leathers. Many a fair troth was plighted, many a love pledge sealed, and when at three in the morning tired dancers slid wearily into the puffing launches, waiting to take them ashore, many hearts felt sad at the parting, yet gloried in the delirious happiness of the past and the pleasant thoughts of the future.

At three-thirty a hush fell on the scene and the quiet swish of the warm waves, smacking in resonance the steelen sides, alone gave sound, a sleep-bringing lullaby dear to the soul of every sailor.

Suddenly, far out to the east, came the harsh call of a syren, shrill, wierd and piercing. A great flare lit up the horizon beyond No-man's Fort and a confused splutter of gun reports cracked noisily across the calm sea.

In a moment every man in the fleet was awake and moving—but alas! too late.

From every side came a swarm of dark grey shapes, moving at lightning speed down the long, far-strung lines. From east they came, from west they came, belching great sheafs of crackling sparks, spitting red whirls of flame, driving huge waves, white-crested, in their van and leaving a twisting spume beneath their stern. Panting in ardent haste, trembling with the awful passion of a thousand devils, they cut along. To the left they went east, to the right they went west—and frenzied sailors cleared the lean quick-firers and cast fair trappings of the evening's ball in ruthless haste aside.

For there could be no two ideas as to the meaning of

this thing,—an enemy, a treacherous, base enemy had come upon them.

Hurry! hurry! my God! hurry! !

Yet all to no purpose. The two lines sped on unchecked and reached each the farther end.

Two hundred angry coughs, two hundred hellish splashes

Boom! Boom!! Boom!!! Boom!!!!

Would they never cease?

The very firmament shook with the immense concussion as the torpedoes struck home. For each large ship there were three torpedoes at least, so one, at that short range, could scarcely fail to take effect. And not content with that, the viperous foe turned sharp about at the column-ends and came hastening down again between new lines.

Boom! Boom!! Boom!!!

Crash! ! !

Fierce boiling gerbs of mud and water shot up mast high against each stricken ship, and descended with thunderous force upon the doomed structures, rupturing strong knit decks, tearing away long guns, destroying boats and bridges. Magazines went off in vast explosion and flung aside their close containing walls as nothing,—flames and smoke spread broad-cast, loosing hells of bloody agony. Boilers burst also with a sudden fury and raised whole decks to the heavens, spewing in anguish many hundred human beings out into the devouring deep.

Boom! Boom! !

A thrice rung whistle sounded, high pitched above the explosions,—ghrr! ting! ting! ! and the hostile craft put forth their utmost speed and fled triumphant out towards the open sea.

And as the black night closed down again as some
vast funeral pall to hide this world of death, clear from
the shore came chimes of a steeple-clock,—

One,—two,—three,—four,—five!

The British Navy had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER X.

The Narrative of Captain Evans.

Here must we pause awhile and stay our pen for thought. Before us lie a hundred different works, books, articles and pamphlets all dealing with the happenings we have felt it our duty to chronicle. Eye witnesses there were in plenty and more than plenty, but the sifting out of the wheat of pure truth from the chaff of undue exaggeration is a matter of no common difficulty. It is old history now that even the "Times" was found in error of a statement, so many and various were the versions of the great disaster. Yet two things require reciting and these two in full. The first essential, to lend a goodly share of realism to this narrative, is some account of the passage of the German torpedo flotilla down the North Sea. But upon this subject authentic information is wonderfully scarce, and for two very excellent reasons. The best of these is that not one single unit of the said flotilla ever again saw a port, and the other is that no German taking part therein lived to boast of the inglorious deed.

So, having eliminated those directly concerned as incapable of imparting the necessary information, we must search farther afield, and we find that the clue to the doings, or such of them as we know of, lies with the overdue passenger steamer "Leopold II." And to the courtesy of her captain do we owe the ensuing tale of the strange occurrences of which he was witness.

The other essential is some account of the damage done by the raid, and for this we shall look to an

exhaustive description published in our leading newspaper, the "Times."

Captain Evans, an English captain of a Belgian-owned steamer, tells a very straightforward, concise story and his statement is valuable as throwing considerable light upon certain matters that required elucidating. It is given in his own words without further comment:—

" You must know that the "Leopold II" is one of the fleet of passenger steamers plying regularly as a rule between Ostend and Dover. On Friday last we left for Amsterdam for a summer week-end excursion, a four day trip frequently organised by the Company to advertise their line. On Monday morning we were booked to leave that port and steam north through the Zuider Zee and out into the sea by the Texel-Vlieland Channel and thence straight down to Dover, where we should have arrived by 2.30 p.m. at the latest. The weather was glorious and the sea smooth as a mill-pond and everything pointed to a very pleasant and possibly a record crossing. We were easily maintaining twenty-one knots an hour and had made Vlieland without the slightest trouble, the low island standing out wonderfully clearly against the blue sky. Texel lay to port and ahead the wide sea, gently waving rollers telling us we had left the inland lake astern.

" We had scarcely cleared the land, when I noticed a great cloud of black smoke smothering the northern horizon and presently a brace of dark dots could be desctried rushing headlong towards us, signalling furiously. Thinking help might be desired, I slowed down to ten knots and presently two torpedo-boats or destroyers ranged up on either side and through a megaphone the Lieutenant of that on the starboard beam hailed us and ordered us to lie to. Having no alternative

I rang down and stopped the engines. A boat put off and was soon alongside, a spruce officer and two men clambered smartly on board. At the same time the German naval ensign was hoisted at the stern of the two low, evil-looking craft.

"Take me to the Captain," said our visitor in excellent English to my quarter-master, who brought him directly on to the bridge. We saluted each other and at a word from him I took him to my cabin. He refused a proffered cigar and began at once to speak.

"I must apologise for detaining you, Captain," he said, "but by the order of His Imperial Majesty the Kaiser all ships found in the North Sea are to be stopped or, should they refuse, to be sunk without further parleying. I regret any inconvenience it may cause you, but must insist upon your steaming in company with us until our Admiral thinks proper to release you."

"But, Sir" I protested, dumbfounded at his coolness, "this is an act of war!"

"War?" he cried smiling, and cracking his fingers derisively in the air, 'pouf! against whom? This ship belongs to Belgium I believe and a small sum will soon cure their grumbles.'

"My passengers?" I argued, 'their friends will feel terribly anxious at our non-arrival.'

"Agreed, Herr Captain, agreed; but anxiety does not kill,—and, to be blunt, we don't care a fig whether they mind or not.'

"May I not at least put into Helder," I pursued, innocently enough.

"Ha! ha! ha! put into Helder! that is a good joke. No, my friend; what have we stopped you for if not to prevent your carrying the news of our presence to those on land. Tomorrow you may do what you please, but

today you join us. But come outside and see in what good company you move.'

"Knowing that further protestations would prove all unavailing, I reluctantly submitted to the inevitable, but firmly resolved to lodge a strong complaint against this unwarranted action the moment we arrived in harbour. On leaving my cabin, I experienced a great shock.

"The whole sea appeared to swarm with German destroyers and torpedo-boats. From the bridge I counted over eighty,—you cannot conceive how imposing they looked, each painted a sombre grey and bearing the German ensign, in every case, at the stern. Behind them were two great armoured cruisers with four funnels, one the 'Gneisenau' and the other a vessel of the 'Roon' type.

"We were still lying motionless rocking gently to and fro upon the even swells and my passengers evidently enjoyed to the full the novel experience. When at last the great flotilla had passed, steaming south at, I judged, fifteen to sixteen knots, the officer at my elbow directed me to start the engines and follow in their wake. His boat, I noticed, had returned to the destroyer, leaving two men fully armed on board. These now stood on either side of the steersmen with loaded rifles. The two destroyers steamed on either beam at a distance of, perhaps, half a cable, so escape was out of the question.

"Moreover, even then I merely imagined that, owing to the German manoeuvres which were then taking place, the umpires had desired to add a touch of realism by holding up and claiming as prizes any steamers they met. I soon found that my captor was disposed for the time to be friendly, and having given the helmsman instructions to do exactly as he was told, entered into conversation with him.

"‘These are the most extensive manœuvres you have undertaken are they not?’ I queried.

“‘Manceuvres?’ he repeated with a laugh, “yes, and very warlike, too. We like to do things well in Germany. Of course we do not hope to equal the British Fleet though.”

“‘How much farther south are you going,’ I asked him.

“‘As far as our orders take us,’ was the enigmatical reply.

“At that moment a gun sounded ahead and we noticed that a huge collier had been called upon to stop. From her black main mast flew the British Mercantile Ensign, an obvious challenge to their right to fire. I was astounded and lost no time in expressing my surprise.

“‘See here, sir,’ I cried, pointing towards the English ship, ‘your folks are playing a dangerous game in firing on that flag. Its a thousand to one that unless an apology is immediately forthcoming you’ll get Charlie Beresford dusting you over.’

“But the German answered never a word. He was staring straight in front of him with a tense, expectant look. My eyes followed his gaze and I saw enacted there a scene that made my blood boil.

“A torpedo-boat ranged up to within fifty yards of the collier, and, as I live, fired two torpedoes squarely into her dirty dust-begrimed flanks. A terrible explosion followed and when the smoke and waves had subsided not a vestige of the ship remained. For a moment I wondered whether I could be sane,—it was inexplicable, dastardly, brutal. A few heads could be observed bobbing about here and there, and I expected at least to see boats lowered to pick up the survivors.

“But instead of that the steermen of the following

torpedo craft deliberately steamed over the swimmers and either sank them or cut them to pieces with the whirring propellers.

"I turned on the officer at my side like a madman.

"'My God! you damnable cowards,' I bellowed, shaking my fist in anger before his face, 'you shall all swing for that I swear, if I live to tell the tale.'

"His features grew livid with rage and in a trice he had whipped out a heavy service revolver and covered me with its menacing barrel.

"'Say another word, you English swine,' he hissed menacingly, 'and I'll send you to h—ll. If you had not a large number of foreigners on board now you would not be afloat this minute.'

"The passengers, horrorstruck at the fiendish act they had just witnessed, had collected round the bridge and were clamouring for me.

"The German called to one of his men to stand by, and gave him instructions to put a bullet through me at the first sign of treachery. Then, turning to the frightened passengers, he spoke somewhat as follows:—

"'Ladies and gentlemen, be calm and have no fear. What you have just seen ahead is merely the first act in a war between Germany and England, a war in which we are determined to win. Be assured you shall without exception be landed in safety with the whole of your belongings, but in the meantime I regret we should find it essential for the fulfilment of our plans to keep you with us. But I must warn you all that though I have but two men on board here with me, any resistance will prove futile, since at the least sign of perfidy, this vessel will be sunk by the two accompanying destroyers with all hands. Moreover, at the first indication of insincerity, your captain will be summarily shot. As it is now

nearing the luncheon hour, I should advise you to go below and partake of a hearty meal as though nothing had happened.'

"Astonished as I was at the whole business, I could not but admire the manner in which this officer managed the affair; his self-restraint was admirable and his *sang froid* magnificent. Like obedient children, the passengers filed slowly below talking nineteen to the dozen, but doubtless quite relieved on learning that neither they nor their goods were in any immediate danger.

"'I beg your pardon, Captain, for my words just now,' began this remarkable fellow, turning to me on seeing his words so literally carried into effect, 'you will understand that certain occasions demand drastic measures, and though I fully comprehended your feelings towards me and my race, nevertheless, it was impossible for me to do other than I did. You see, upon my action depended the safety of this whole ship,—had I flinched and had you seized my men and myself, you would all by now be drowned; possibly that would have been my fate as well, and I have a desire to live for some time yet,' he concluded with a smile.

"'Well, sir,' I replied, 'you are at least straightforward, man to man; and if it is of any comfort to you, I will pledge everyone on this ship not to oppose your wishes. But, mind you, I do not consider the actions I have witnessed any the less questionable.'

"'Do not trouble your head about that, Captain. That is our affair and it is we who will have to face the music. I am pleased you take so sensible a view of the situation and, believe me, it will prove to your advantage. But what about some lunch?"

"'I ordered my steward to bring up a cold collation for

two with a bottle of champagne and soon his ready tongue had almost made me forget my curious position. He was wonderfully well-read and spoke on every conceivable topic in faultless English. He discussed our Navy and compared the various types therein with those of the German Fleet, invariably to the disadvantage of the latter. For half an hour we sat thus conversing pleasantly and then again sauntered out on to the bridge. Another vessel had been sighted ahead,—a great British cargo steamer,—and two destroyers were already making towards her.

"'Go inside, Captain, if you think the sight is likely to upset you,' urged my companion.

"'But you are surely not going to sink her, too?' I queried, sickened with horror.

"'Those are the Kaiser's orders,' he replied shortly.

"I stood as petrified; as in the case of the collier, two torpedoes were fired at close range into the defenceless merchant ship, blowing her to smithereens. And of this ship also no single member of the crew was rescued.

"In less than two hours I witnessed the destruction of eleven vessels,—four large merchant steamers, three passenger steamers, three colliers and a cable ship. How many of my countrymen were thus deliberately murdered, Heaven alone can tell. We for our part were quite powerless to do anything and I even saw some of the passengers taking photographs of the explosions or of the wreckage as we passed over the fatal spot. But the most awful feature of this death drama was still to be enacted. As the two torpedo-boats told off for the ghastly work had ranged up alongside the eleventh ship, the look out reported a large four funnelled vessel on the horizon to starboard. It was at once evident that the stranger must have witnessed the destruction of the

last collier and was bearing up for investigation. As she bulked larger and larger on the horizon all eyes were turned in that direction, and I noticed a look of apprehension upon the face of my captor. Hastily fetching my binoculars from the chart room I fixed them on the approaching ship and there, clear against the blue summer sky, waved the White Ensign.

"She was a British Cruiser!

"My heart leapt at the knowledge, but immediately afterwards I realized the terrible odds she would have to face. One ship against two of similar class and over four-score torpedo vessels! It was too much. Glancing around, I noticed that hasty preparations were being made on board the 'Gneisnau' and 'Roon,'—for such, I had ascertained, was the second German cruiser—for the coming conflict. Through my glasses, too, I could see similar preparations being conducted in the English ship. The topmasts were struck, the boats dropped and left behind, and a continuous rain of wooden articles, chairs, bookcases, etc., seem to fall from her straight grey sides into the sea. The destroyers and torpedo-boats, I was glad to see, fought shy of her, unless indeed the two armoured cruisers were considered capable of sinking her out of hand.

"I luckily had a 'Brassey's Annual' and dipped into it to see what chance the poor vessel would have against odds so great. She had made her number by Jane's Code, and on looking up C.E., I found she was the 'Euryalus' of 12,000 tons, armed with two 9.2 in. B.L. and twelve 6 in. Q.F. as her main armament. The 'Gneisnau' was of 11,600 tons and the 'Roon' displaced 9,500 tons and between them they mounted twelve 8.2 in. Q.F. and sixteen 6 in. Q.F.; moreover, they could concentrate their united fire on the one British ship,

whilst the latter would be forced to divide her favours between two. The actual speed of all three vessels was about the same. Though convinced the 'Euryalus' would put up a splendid fight, I anticipated a speedy ending to it and an easy victory for the Germans.

"At eight thousand yards the 'Euryalus' tried a sighting shot from her forward 9.2 in., and hit the 'Gneisnau' fair between the two 8.2 in. guns of the starboard central battery. A huge flare followed and, unable to restrain themselves, my passengers sent up a salvo of cheers. Soon they were at it hammer and tongs, and presently the British cruiser appeared to be on fire in a score of places. The German ships had, by their superior gun-fire, soon knocked three of her funnels over the side, and her speed dropped to a mere crawl. Yet one thing we noticed. The 'Roon' had steamed up on the port side and the 'Gneisnau' to starboard,—but never once were the great bow and stern chasers of the 'Euryalus' turned on the smaller German. They devoted their whole attention to the 'Gneisnau'. Presently we could see that the 'Gneisnau' had ceased to move and that, though the fire from the British cruiser was weak, that from the largest German ship was weaker still.

"All this time we were steaming farther and farther away to the southward, and the combatants were now little more than specks on the horizon. With the aid of glasses, however, it was still quite easy to follow the course of events. As I stood there, my eyes glued to the lenses, I witnessed a marvellous thing. The 'Euryalus' swung slowly round and laboured heavily alongside the immobile 'Gneisnau'; for a moment they seemed to be touching and then a huge gerb of spray shot skywards between the two ships and, with bewildering sudden-

ness, both of them disappeared beneath the waves.

"They had torpedoed each other simultaneously at a few yards distance!

"An hour later the 'Roon' caught us up, (we had slowed down to ten knots to allow this) and confirmed what we had seen. A sorry plight she looked to be in, too, and very different from the smart ship that had set out so full of confidence to the fight. All her funnels were pierced through and through, though already men were at work examining the damage and fastening over canvas to assist the draught of the furnaces. Her masts were much hit and the main topmast had disappeared altogether. Two of her six inch guns were also out of action and her side was scarred and torn in a terrible manner. At least, I thought, they shall not twist the lion's tail with impunity. Then came this stunning reflection,—and I wondered why it had not come to me before.

"Why had Germany gone to war with England?

"When I had left Amsterdam the whole world was at peace,—and Germany and England were particularly friendly. What had brought about the sudden change? Strange as it may appear now, I never connected the journey of this huge flotilla into southern waters with the Royal Review at Spithead. But calm thought certainly made the reason of these curious happenings of which I and all in my ship had been witness, even more inexplicable than ever.

"The evening drew in slowly and up to ten o'clock, when we passed the Straits of Dover, seven more ships had been blown to pieces, in each case all the crew being left to drown or swim as providence provided. Eight only saw land again and of these, I note by to-night's papers, three are insane.

"At midnight we were ordered to stop and a boat with half a dozen men came alongside and proceeded to the engine room. In twenty minutes they returned and one of them threw a small piece of shining metal into the sea. Then, with a friendly adieu, they, my captor and the two sailors, all left and once more I was in command of my own ship. As soon as the two destroyers had rushed away into the night, I rang down for full speed. No response being forthcoming, I sent a quarter-master below and presently up tore my engineer, bursting with indignation. He and the four men with him had been securely bound by our visitors, who before they left had then carefully removed a small but essential working piece of the engines, and this it was I had seen flung into the sea. However, to shorten my story, the loss was easily remedied, as was doubtless intended, and after an hour and a half of hammering and filing we were once more steaming full speed in the direction of Dover. We sighted no other ship and arrived at our destination shortly after five, greatly to the delight of the many friends of my belated passengers, who had crowded the Lord Warden and neighbouring Hotels through a night of terrible anxiety and suspense. Of one thing only am I glad, and that is that there is one less German cruiser for us to smash up when we get our fleet in working order again."

CHAPTER XI.

In the Light of Day.

From the "Times," Wednesday, June 9th:—

"GERMANY'S DASTARDLY ACT.

"A CRIME AGAINST CIVILISATION.

"DETAILS OF DAMAGE DONE.

"(From our Portsmouth Correspondent.)

"The Dockyard authorities are now in a position to furnish certain definite information as to the damage done by the cowardly raid of Monday night. It seems that all due care had been exercised and that, although no such action as that taken by Germany had for a moment been considered probable or even possible, yet destroyer pickets were detached to patrol both the entrances to the Solent and adjacent waters, a wise precaution invariably resorted to on such occasions. The attack came entirely as a surprise, and the 'Arun,' Lieut. and Commander Williams (one of the River class of destroyer of 525 tons and 25 kts. speed) was cruising alone off the Nab Light; Commander Williams, who swam ashore subsequent to the sinking of his ship, reports that he noticed the bow-waves of the oncoming torpedo craft and made the common signal. Receiving no answer he jumped to the most impossible, yet, as it happened, correct conclusion,—that an enemy was about

to make a night attack upon the fleet. In three minutes the searchlight was glaring upon the Germans, and his men stood ready at the guns. He had, at the first warning, turned his boat towards Portsmouth, but had not sufficient steam for a greater speed than fifteen knots. He was speedily overhauled and the German destroyers opened fire on him without delay, to which he made a telling reply from all the guns that would bear, at the same time signalling danger to the Fleet. But the enemy allowed their prey no grace and sped at over twenty-five knots amongst their unprepared victims. The 'Arun' was sunk by sheer weight of numbers, but had the satisfaction of seeing two of her enemies succumb to her well-directed fire. Of her crew of seventy only seven reached the shore, landing on the Isle of Wight at Nettlestone Point, near Sea-view. The 'Rother' was similarly treated at the Hurst Castle entrance, being beached, after a gallant fight, close to the pier at Sconce Point. What followed is now well known to all. The attack had evidently been carefully planned and each boat had been allotted a certain definite task, each commander told at which unit of our fleet he was to launch his torpedoes. When they had steamed nearly the entire length of our lines, a shrill syren sounded from the leading boat and the speed of all simultaneously dropped until they were moving at no more than ten knots. Arrived opposite their respective victims, the torpedoes were deliberately discharged and a second hoot, thrice repeated, sent the entire force steaming headlong forward again. Two or three divisions, however, turned back to complete any work that might have been left undone in the first wild rush.

"Early this morning I was down on the Parade and found there almost as great a crowd as on Monday

morning, alas! under what different circumstances! And melancholy in the extreme was the sight that met my eyes, for where yesterday had been anchored long lines of the finest warships ever set afloat, to-day remained above the water but their masts and fighting tops,—in some instances, it is true, the upper deck is showing, but in the majority of cases the depth has been sufficient to immerse them half way up their funnels. Eleven vessels turned over on their sides and of them no trace whatever appears .The havoc amongst the men is not commensurate with that in material; thank God! before the ships sank, sufficient time elapsed to remove the greater part of the crews. Yet even so the roll-call reveals terrible losses, and of the former total of over fifty thousand officers and men, two thousand three hundred and seventeen still remain to be accounted for. When one considers our loss in ships, the mind is appalled; there is not a single unit of all that great assembly, excepting of course torpedo craft, that was not struck by one or more torpedoes. It is useless to seek for consolation in view of the awful circumstances, yet there may be some who will derive a little from the knowledge that, though all our ships were torpedoed, sixteen were, by the superhuman efforts of their officers and crews, prevented from immediate foundering.

"These ships are the 'Dreadnought,' flagship of Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, which was struck twice, but both in the same compartment; she was this morning towed into Portsmouth with a heavy list and leaking badly, and has now been placed in No. 15 Dock, where repairs are already being executed. The 'Lord Nelson' and the Japanese battleship 'Kashima' lie close to one another on the mud off Puckpool Point,

near Ryde, and closer to Ryde pier, also on the mud, is the armoured cruiser 'Defence.' The 'Shannon,' a sister ship, and the 'Duke of Edinburgh' and 'Natal' all entered the harbour under their own steam and have been docked in Nos. 12, 13 and 14; their damage is slight and, as in the case of the 'Dreadnought,' it is anticipated that a fortnight or three weeks will see them fit for service again. The Japanese cruiser 'Aso' has been placed in the North Lock and in the South Lock lies the 'Mars' with, next door in the Deep dock, the 'Prince George.' The small 'Tsushima' has been accommodated in No. 11, the only other dock capable of taking a large vessel; even so the utmost care had to be exercised in docking the 'Natal' in No. 12, which has a length but five feet greater than that of the ship. Never have we felt the lack of docking facilities so much. Of the remaining ships that managed to keep afloat, the 'Swiftsure' and 'Triumph' are berthed alongside the South Railway Jetty and already gangs of men are employed in removing their stores, ammunition, etc. The 'Drake' is high and dry on the beach under Point Battery, the 'Antrim' has sunk in the tidal basin and her sister ship 'Roxburgh' is moored in the stream off Priddy's Hard, she being the least harmed vessel in the whole fleet. A torpedo exploded against the blade of the starboard propeller and blew a hole in the stern ballast compartment, doing but very slight damage; she will be docked as soon as possible and have a new propeller and shaft fitted, when she will at once be re-commissioned for active service.

"All the other ships taking part in the Review have been sunk at their moorings, though it is anticipated that nearly all can be raised and repaired in a few months' time. Diving parties are already at work

examining the hulls of the ships and their complete report is not yet to hand. The following are the names of those vessels that turned over on their sides and for raising which little hope can be entertained:—

“ Battleships: — ‘Africa’ (16,350 tons), ‘Tango’ (Japanese, 11,000 tons), ‘Ramillies,’ ‘Repulse’ (14,350 tons) and ‘Renown’ (12,350 tons).

“ Armoured Cruisers: — ‘Bedford’ (9,800 tons), ‘Devonshire’ (10,850 tons).

“ Protected Cruisers: — ‘Spartiate’ (11,000 tons), ‘Edgar,’ ‘Hawke’ (7,350 tons) and ‘Niikata’ (Japanese 3,420 tons). -

“ In addition our three finest armoured cruisers, ‘Indomitable,’ ‘Inflexible,’ and ‘Invincible,’ though lying upon an even keel, have been so extensively damaged that their repairs must be left until the last in view of our poor docking accommodation. At least three torpedoes exploded against each of their hulls and their loss is a most grievous disaster to us.

“(Part of this appeared in our second edition of yesterday).”

There followed columns of data of each ship, which are of little interest here; but the leading article, a trenchant condemnation of Germany’s dastardly deed, noted the ominous fact that, including the Mediterranean Fleet and such old stagers as the ‘Nile’ and ‘Trafalgar,’ England had remaining but eighteen battleships all told; and of armoured cruisers there were no more than eleven, though two fine vessels were on the China Station. And to these forces Germany could oppose a fleet of twenty battleships of the first class, four of the second class recently modernized, and twelve

powerful coast-defence ironclads of from 4,110 tons to 7,400 tons. In cruisers she was weak, but even so, and after the loss of the 'Gneisenau,' a squadron of seven, all modern and well armoured, was in commission; adding armoured ships of both classes together it will be seen that we had but twenty-nine available to forty-three for Germany, with age in favour of Germany. No wonder the people of England were scared! for they guessed what would most likely take place as the first act of the enemy after war had been declared. And so all men who had rifles, guns or revolvers sought them out and cleaned them, burnishing their barrels with great care,—and such as had no weapon hastened to buy one and soon the crack! crack! of many kinds of piece rang down the quiet lanes or across the broad moors of the British Islands. Yet gun licenses were taken out to no great extent, and the law here decided to be deaf and blind,—and the private practice went on, crack! crack!!

CHAPTER XII.

The Avengers.

Lieut and Commander Allan Nelson was quietly reading J. L. Bashford's article on the "Imperial German Navy" in the 1905 edition of the "Naval Annual." He was more comfortably situated than most commanders of destroyers and his cabin had an air of snugness about it that belonged to few other ships coming in the same category,—in fact only twenty-eight other destroyers boasted such quarters for their skipper. His boat, the "Afridi," belonged to a class known as "sea-going," of which the first five had been launched in the beginning of 1907. She displaced eight hundred tons, or nearly four times as much as early vessels of the type, and had moreover a not bad speed of 33 nautical miles per hour. On trial this had been much exceeded in all the class and they could be depended upon for the designed velocity at any time, thanks to the installation of turbines. A junior sat opposite him, chiefly so that there should be someone to whom to address remarks. Both pulled at blackened pipes and sought occasional liquid comfort from tumblers at their elbows.

"See, here Fitz," puff, puff went the pipe, as the Commander paused to get the electric light better fixed for reading, "this Johnny says that 'German boats carry only three 1.96 in. guns'—so I spose we with our little twelves could knock holes in half a dozen at once?"

"What's a one-point-nine-six, Nelson?"

"Ignorant young beggar; fancy not knowing that.

Here, chuck me that Pocket Book and let's have a squint, — ah! here y're, six-pounders of course. Thanks, old man—but not *all* soda. Here's fun!" gurgle, gurgle, gurgle, and they both started refilling their pipes from a common baccy jar.

"Big lot of us here to-night, Fitz."

"So I saw,—but dy'e know how many, skip?"

"Well, not to a pip, exactly. Our own division starts off with ten thirty-threes" (for so they were called in the service) "under Fortescue. Mahon, in the 'Forward' has twenty 'Rivers' of the Eastern Division, whilst the 'Adventure' came in yesterday with the 'Terror,' 'Hades,' and 'Fearful,' of the thirty-six knot type and a score of thirty knotters. That makes,—let me see!—oh, and there are a dozen at least of the Reserve out, so altogether we're not far short of seventy taken all round."

"Lord! why can't we do somethin' with 'em, Nelson?"

"No chance now, my boy, since brother Wilhelm's turned good and promised to behave,—Yes! Come in," and a sailor entered, after knocking.

"Captain Fortescue signals he intends leaving at six o'clock to-morrow, sir."

"All right, thank you." The door slammed and Nelson seeing his companion yawn, said, "Come, Fitz, in you turn for your nap."

This night was Monday, June 7th.

Commander Nelson was glad when his relief came up and gratefully swallowed the hot cocoa that had been kept simmering on a small stove, before retiring for the rest of the night.

Rat-ta-tat-tat!

Commander Nelson sat up like a jack-in-the-box and narrowly escaped braining himself against a slanting

ventilator across his bunk; he glared angrily at the intruder who stood respectfully at the door.

"What the devil do you mean by disturbing me just as I'm going off to sleep? Good Gad! you deserve a dose of 10A, and I'm not so deuced sure you won't get it. If you haven't got more sense, well," etc., etc., and for a few brief seconds he poured out the vials of his wrath upon the rude confounder of his peaceful slumbers in language as flowing as it was picturesque.

"Please, sir," began the man, in a tone of meek humility, "it's only to tell you that Captain Mahon signals all commandin' orcifers to repair aboard 'im, himmediate."

"Why the dickens couldn't you tell me that at once," fairly yelled the irate commander, as he leapt into nether garments, vest, hose and boots. "What's the time? Near two bells, d'ye say? Got some cocoa ready? Good. Where's my cap,—not that one, you blithering idiot,—yes that's it"—and Lieut and Commander Nelson tore as a human hurricane up on deck, gulping down half a pint of tepid cocoa in his flight through the ward-room. A boat awaited him and in no more than six minutes from the time of waking he was alongside the "Forward," senior ship,—first of the officers to arrive; and with a loud clang there sounded two bells, or five o'clock! Captain Mahon met him and, with serious face, bid him good morning; three minutes later a small crowd of clean-shaven men were trooping after Captain Mahon towards the ward-room of the scout, the largest apartment in the little ship.

"Gentlemen," he began, having carefully closed the door, "a great catastrophe has taken place during the last hour. Yesterday we were, as you know, at peace with all the world, and so proud of our pre-eminent

position that we had arranged a Review upon a basis of magnificence never before attempted. Now," he caught his breath as though the words choked him, "we—are—at war—with—Germany—and the British Navy has been almost completely destroyed!!!"

For a few moments after this awful announcement, the young officers looked at one another aghast, horrified beyond measure at the dreadful import of Captain Mahon's words. That he spoke the truth, they did not for a minute doubt. Nelson was the first to recover his presence of mind.

"And—how—was—this—thing—done, sir?" he questioned deliberately, as though weighing each word in its relation to the dread answer they all anticipated. Capt. Mahon told them what he knew in a few rapid sentences and ended up by saying :

"And now, gentlemen, it is for us to play *our* part. The enemy made for the Straits of Dover after their blackguard deed, and not one of them must escape,—you understand, not *one*."

He quickly outlined a rough plan of action and having made sure that all comprehended exactly what he intended, bade them good-day and saw them off the ship. He noticed with a sigh of deep satisfaction that the day was breaking as perfect as those that had preceded it. No cloud blotted the light blue-grey of the early morning sky, no wind stirred the oily waters of the Medway as they swirled bubbling past the lean sides of the vicious little scout.

At four bells in the morning watch (6.0 a.m.), a long line of scouts, destroyers and torpedo-boats crept silently out into the tide and pointed carefully north-east towards the well-marked Duke of Edinburgh's Channel.

They were the Avengers.

And behind them steamed six huge protected cruisers, a fitting bodyguard for the mosquito fleet. Once in the open sea, they accelerated their speed and sped down towards the narrows of Dover Strait. Then a separation took place. The slower boats were sent on in advance and, as they pressed ahead, spread out fan-wise across the twenty miles of sea dividing England from France. Thirty there were in this first line and the distance between them was less than three-quarters of a mile. The second line lay six miles further north and here were collected thirty more destroyers in groups of two, ten being of the speedy "Afriди" type. Towards the shore at either end of these lines lay the cruisers,—two off Dover and two off Cape Griz Nez, and with the former was the "Terror," with the latter the record-breaking "Fearful"; these two and the "Hades" had steamed upwards of forty knots on trial and mounted heavy batteries of 4 in. Q.F. and of 3 in. twelve-pounder guns.

Captain Mahon, in the scout "Forward," took up his position in the middle, of the second line.

There remained but the other two cruisers, the scout "Adventure," and a dozen destroyers. These had a special task,—to prevent any of the German torpedo-craft seeking refuge in French ports. So towards the south they steamed, and presently the early bathers at Boulogne were astonished to see the "Diadem," a great vessel of 11,000 tons, steam past the Plage, followed by three destroyers. The remaining ships were distributed at specified distances up the coast,—all except the "Hades," that is.

The "Hades" set a south-westerly course and disappeared speedily over the undulating horizon. The

trap had been prepared,—would the enemy walk into it? Seeing all arrangements were to his liking, Capt. Mahon signalled that he desired all hands to make a hearty breakfast. He knew the value of a well-lined belt in action and in spite of the excitement born of expectancy, made a great meal himself. In the curious fleet he commanded, the *raison d'être* of these manœuvres had speedily gone the round and right glad were the men at last to have a "smack" at the hated "Dutchmen," as they would persist in calling the Germans.

Lieut. Nelson and his brother officer FitzHerbert were on the bridge, both feeling far too excited to spend more than three minutes over their déjeuner and were discussing the coming battle in high spirits.

"Gad! Fitz, we will give 'em a gruelling, what?"

"Rather, skipper—if the beggars will only face us, that is," returned the other, in a tone of real apprehension. The spirit of Horatio Nelson spoke there and easy it was to see that lack of fighting had in no wise quenched the inborn ardour for battle, the birthright of the British sailor. It has been said "despise not thine enemies,"—but to the Briton the astonishing thing has always been that any man should have the courage to become a foe of his race. The great Nelson himself would never take his opponents seriously and was sadly affronted by their lack of initiative. Ships may come and ships may go, guns may change and new inventions be evolved, yet ever the same remain the officers and men serving under the White Ensign.

Lieut. Nelson looked at his watch and remarked that the sun was mounting higher and higher in the heavens.

"They are a very long time," he said, staring ahead towards the first line of destroyers. He did not know

that the Germans had stopped for an hour or two to collect and to count their losses, also to coal from six accompanying colliers before sinking them ; the race for home would not be for laggards. There had been ninety of them when they started out, conveyed by two armoured cruisers. Now, but eighty-two remained and the "Gneisnau" had been destroyed by the "Euryalus," as we have seen. For besides the two boats accounted for by the ill-fated British destroyer "Arun," the "Rother" had blown one to pieces and five had met disaster in collision or by running aground in the wild flurry of escaping. And as they lay in groups upon the calm water, still within sight of England, a small dark dot was observed rising rapidly over the western horizon. No sooner one, than two,—then three,—and five,—and eight—

The Germans had sunk the battleships and cruisers of the combined British and Japanese fleets but had ignored the torpedo-craft! And now forty of them were in full pursuit, with furnaces roaring at crimson heat and engines throbbing with the speed of sleuth-hounds. They, also, were the Avengers.

Haste,—haste,—or they are lost to you. For a foolish policy had given England over thirty destroyers with ridiculously low speeds, gaunt, high-bowed vessels touching scarce twenty-five knots,—and their speed must be the speed of all the boats if piecemeal annihilation were to be avoided. So the Germans turned east and fled incontinently and, having a better speed, gained distance and seemed in fair way to a road of safety.

It is the pace that kills.

Ten minutes had elapsed since this great race commenced, when phz—z—z ! ! great clouds of white steam leapt from S84, and her speed fell off to nothing.

Bang! Bang ! ! Grhrr,—Bang ! !

The British destroyers were up to her, around her, over her, and S84 ceased to exist. Next came the turn of G110; her crew spat feebly with their inferior little weapons as their enemy rushed in on every side. A vast crash of concentrated quick-firers, a vivid spurt of multi-coloured flame, one sullen, rending boom,—and G110 had also ceased to exist.

And thus with five!

And all the time they tore madly towards the east,—stricken with a ghastly fear; and after them tore as madly the British boats, not half their number, mark you! but *British*.

For they were the Avengers.

Then came a greater shock. Ahead was flying the slow "Roon" at all her 21 knots, she having gone straight on and thus gained a lead of fifteen miles or so; and suddenly she, too, began firing and swung sharply to starboard, altering course nearly due to the south. A swiftly steaming object could be described far beyond,—a long, low, devilish thing with smoke-belching funnels. The German officers marked her—and shuddered. They knew the "Hades" and knew, moreover, that where she was, there would be collected others of her kind. The trap was closing already.

Just then, two funnelled D 10 coughed and fell behind,—a splutter of confused firing and D 10 ceased to exist. There was evidently no turning back,—and now they were bearing north into the very jaws of the Strait. The "Roon" held on south and seemed likely to clear away completely,—a smudge of smoke over the horizon ahead brought the hearts of her officers into their mouths.

The smudge grew,—then came another, and both took shape.

In fifteen minutes the "Diadem" and "Terrible" were bearing down upon the benighted German, and with them three destroyers. They had no armoured sides,—but they had Britons behind the guns, Britons sworn to avenge. On each side of her they ranged up; no fancy distances, be it known, but, at inside two thousand yards, a hail of steelen shells presently burst as meteors on the smaller ship.

She fought bravely,—but what could that avail? At the first discharge a 380 pound shell whizzed irresistibly into her vitals, and the foreward turret lay jammed and listless as the smaller projectiles burst at its base. There was to be no surrender,—indeed, it might not have been accepted. At all events, in a far shorter space of time than it has taken to recount, the "Roon" had had her teeth drawn, even to the little spitting Maxims; past her motionless bulk steamed the two British cruisers, on opposite sides and on opposite courses.

Three torpedoes were discharged and two took effect,—under either beam at the third funnel. Shattered and rent, gasping and torn, the "Roon" rose boldly by the centre, groaned, spewed fearsome gerbs of boiling steam and water, groaned again and disappeared. The "Powerful" lowered four boats into the calm sea, but they returned empty from their search. The German Navy had yet to realise that at two thousand yards, ten shots from a British 6 in. gun fired in one minute meant ten palpable hits in vulnerable parts. Having completed the business ("so much for that little job," said her men) the cruisers and their attendant destroyers turned north, and as they steamed the sound of heavy firing came down to them; the rats had entered the trap and were feeling worried!

Three rushing forms cut silently towards them,

sighted them and turned west. Like hounds from a leash, their three accompanying British destroyers sped away in swift pursuit steaming, in that calm sea, every bit of their thirty knots.

They returned in the course of the day, each with marks of combat, each with dead and wounded,—yet each with a tale of conquest. But how fared it in the Straits of Dover? There is little enough to tell. Reduced to well below fourscore, the Germans had, from the commencement, endeavoured rather to escape than fight,—and dashed headlong at their relentless foe. The first British line met them, steaming slowly, and pouring in a telling fire, striving rather to injure and hamper than to destroy. This part was left to the second line; and right well they did their work, too.

Lieut. Nelson stood on the bridge and watched the charge in tense expectation. At the guns stood his men, and they, too, watched. The rush had seemed swarm-like,—a black mass bearing down upon the closing in British destroyers. But the British vessels had thrice the weight of metal, though many less in number of boats; hence, when the rival forces disengaged, it was seen that the Germans had thinned out very considerably. Lieutenant Nelson rang down for full speed and sent his gallant craft dashing to meet a group of four.

They withstood his attack and put up quite a fight and their determination annoyed him. A word to the man at the helm and the "Afridi" twisted nearly in her own length and shore, rasping across a German foe.

Crash! Grate! Brazz, Ping! Crash! !

Out again and with a nasty twist in the bows. But three more of the enemy had passed into history and the fourth was waiting for the final touch. She was a large vessel of the newest type from Schichau's Yard.

"Try that shallow-set torpedo, Haines," said Lieut. Nelson, laconically,—"It will give the beggar a run even if we miss. Set it to float, see."

"Yes sir," and he went about the job, the German, being disabled, having perforce to wait.

The aim was splendid, though of course a miss at that range was almost out of the question. S 136 went sky-high and splash!, splash! came the bits of her; some were unpleasant, too, human and gruesome. An arm slid across the deck at Nelson's feet and FitzHerbert was promptly sick. A seaman picked it up and taking it by the hand flung it at a pal.

"Ere y'are, mate, 'eres a Dutchman come to shake 'ands long o' you!"

"Chuck that into the sea, you swipe." Lieut. Nelson looked a lot more as he said this, and for three days that particular sailor avoided him.

Not one German boat escaped, no man of their crews lived to tell the story. When the British torpedo-craft had again collected off Sheerness, it became possible to count the losses. The "Thrasher," "Bat," "Panther" and "Violet" were missing of the older boats. Of the 550 ton class, the "Blackwater," "Foyle" and "Nith" were not present; the "Crusader" and "Nubian," sisters to the "Afridi" had also been sunk,—and that was all. To the four score and ten of the enemy, England had suffered a loss of but nine!

They had, indeed, been the Avengers.

And the folks in Germany waited, and waited, and waited. But not so much as a sign was vouchsafed them of the disaster that had befallen their fellow-countrymen. But time told its own tale and soon the German people realised that having asked for war they should have war,—and bloody at that.

And even then the Ministers of the two countries had not left! So suddenly and dramatically had hostilities commenced that for some days it was not generally recognised that two great Powers were at hand-grips one with the other.

Yet down in the country, in fields and on hills, men,—stern, silent men,—practised steadily with rifle and revolver.

Crack! Crack! !

It was "Bushido,"—the Spirit of Patriotism.

CHAPTER XIII.

England Prepares.

"We, by the Grace of Heaven, Edward VII, King of England and the British Empire, Emperor of India, seated on the Throne occupied by our fore-fathers through all ages, do hereby make proclamation to all our loyal and brave subjects as follows:—

"We hereby declare war against the German Empire, and we command our navy and army to carry on hostilities against her in obedience to duty and with all their strength, and we also command all our competent authorities to make every effort in pursuance of their duties and in accordance with their powers to attain the national aim, with all the means within the limits of the law of nations.

"We have always deemed it essential to international relations and made it our constant aim to pacific progress of our Empire in civilization, to strengthen our friendly ties with other states, and to establish a state of things which would maintain enduring peace in the entire world, and assure the future security of our Dominions without injury to the rights and interests of the other powers.

Our competent authorities have also performed their duties in obedience to our will, so that our relations with all Powers have been steadily growing in cordiality.

"It was thus entirely against our expectation or desire that we have unhappily come to open hostilities against Germany. The safety of our Empire has, by a dastardly action, been jeopardised and the interests thereof menaced.

"It is our earnest wish that by the loyalty and courage of our faithful subjects peace may shortly be permanently restored and the glory of our Empire preserved.

Given under our hand, this 9th day of June, 19—."

EDOUARD REX.

Buckingham Palace.

In this manner did our King declare war upon the enemies of our beloved country and never before has such enthusiasm reigned as when the above rescript was read from the steps of the Royal Exchange.

At the Admiralty, importunate journalists badgered the officials for information—and obtained none. The news sheets sold in their millions and paper makers reaped a golden harvest, recalling yet exceeding the boom in that particular trade during the South African campaign. At the War Office chaos held regal sway and somnolent permanent officials were racking their brains to discover what they had been employed to do. They were soon told; Lord Kitchener chanced, by the best of good fortune, to be home on furlough and on Wednesday morning he received a hasty summons to wait upon the King at the Palace. He was not kept kicking his heels long, for in less than two minutes he was ushered into the august presence.

"Lord Kitchener, we have reached a crisis in the history of our Empire which unless skilfully handled may bring about our downfall. I hear that a huge fleet of transports is steaming down Channel escorted by the whole German Fleet, and we may take it that a landing will pretty easily be effected on our coasts, for without our fleet it would be difficult to prevent. I am also told that things are not as they should be at the War Office.

On my own initiative I have sent for you,—will you accept the appointment of the Generalissimo?"

The General drew himself up proudly and replied, "Your wish, Sire, is my pleasure."

The King held out his hand impulsively and clutched that of the great bronzed soldier before him.

"A thousand thanks, Kitchener; you have greatly relieved my mind. One more word and it is this,—you are invested with absolute authority at the War-Office, but until the enemy is driven from the land you are not to take the field yourself. I want your brain to control affairs from head-quarters. Good-bye and Heaven be with you in your mission."

"I will do my best, Sire, and may God make me worthy of your Majesty's confidence."

As the stalwart form left the room, King Edward gave a long drawn sigh of infinite relief, and for the first time since the awful Monday night, the tense, worn look on his face relaxed.

"With that man we may yet pull through," he muttered, and rose to greet his greatest Admiral, Sir John Angler.

"Pretty awful this, Sir John?" he said as he shook hands; long years of acquaintanceship had warmed his heart towards this brown faced, grey-haired sailor, and he knew full well the love he bore his country and his devotion to his King.

"Bad, yes Sire, but it might well have been worse; why if they give us time we shall have 'em all afloat again and fit as ever for giving and taking hard knocks. Besides the skunks didn't get off scot free, either."

"What's that, Angler?"

"Has your Majesty not been told of the manner of our revenge?" cried the Admiral in astonished tones.

"Not a word, my friend, not a word. Tell me the news, for believe me, I can do with a little cheering up."

"Well, Sire, to be brief, although they may have sunk a considerable proportion of our Navy not a single man lived to boast the deed. On their way over they met the "Euryalus" and sank her, but she took the cruiser "Gneisenau" down with her. The rest were trapped in the Straits of Dover on the return journey; about seventy boats out of Chatham and Sheerness lay across the Straits and another forty chased 'em up from Portsmouth. They had not the ghost of a chance, your Majesty, and were destroyed to a man; the "Roon," the second armoured cruiser, was blown to pieces by two of our protected ships."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" ejaculated the King, his wan face wreathed in smiles as Sir John's story proceeded, "may the Lord prosper our cause, for it is a just one. And what plans have you and your folks evolved for the future?"

"We have cabled Admiral Scott to bring the Mediterranean Fleet up North and at once engage the German Fleet which has put to sea as escort to the transports."

But the German Fleet is over three times as numerous and at least twice as strong, my dear friend. Surely you are taking a big risk in thus hazarding the remainder of our fleet? they will assuredly be destroyed."

"They *will* be destroyed, I expect," was the startling reply, "but not before they have done tremendous damage to the enemy, sire. We must remember that until we can reduce the German Navy somewhat it will be useless to fit up a force in our own ports. They would merely annihilate each squadron singly as it went out; if I may refer to the Russo-Japanese conflict, it was often

said prior to the fall of Port Arthur that had the Russian fleet at that port been launched head-long at the Japanese, they must have sunk some of our Ally's ships even if they had themselves all been destroyed. With their forces thus reduced the Battle of Tsushima might have had a very different ending for the Japanese. We therefore propose doing all the harm we can with our available ships, in the hopes of so crippling the German forces that our reserves from Portsmouth, now hastily being repaired will find their complete destruction a matter of little difficulty."

"Admirable, Sir John, but it is taking tremendous risk."

"Yes, Sire, but without tremendous risks nothing great has ever been accomplished. We are not going to fail, Sire, though the consummation of our hopes may be somewhat tardy in realisation."

"And in the meantime, Admiral?"

"In the meantime we are co-operating with the War Office in a plan of first resistance which will allow us to formulate our more ambitious projects, the details of which require very careful investigation and study. One thing is essential, namely to make Portsmouth immune from capture by land. To this end many thousand men are already at work and thousands more are on their way to the Hampshire Downs and within a fortnight or three weeks we shall have completed a ring of fortifications rivalling those even of Port Arthur. Your soldiers, Sire, have not been wasting their time in recent years and it is but the finishing touch we are giving."

After a few more words the bluff old Admiral also bowed himself out and King Edward, hearing a sound of childish voices, went to the door. The two youngest

children of his eldest son were without, strayed from their governess ; the King called them and in their merry prattle soon forgot his worries. Ah ! no wonder the King was beloved, nay, almost worshiped by his people ; he was a King and yet so much a man.

CHAPTER XIV.

It's a Way they have in the Navy.

Admiral Sir Percy Scott was strangely happy on Tuesday morning. A long cable had reached him at Gibraltar, (where, by good fortune, he lay with the bulk of his fleet), telling him of the fearful catastrophe of the night before that had robbed his native land of the entire Navy,—with the exception of the ships under his command. Of course he should have had little cause for elation, but then—he was Admiral Sir Percy Scott; and that meant much. The cable had told him that he alone lay between England and invasion and that he was to steam forthwith north, meet the German Fleet and do his best to destroy it. Now the Admiral had had a fad (his friends called it “a bee in his bonnet”) ever since he had been in the service. He held that no gun should ever be fired unless the man behind it was certain of hitting that at which he had aimed.

A little second-class cruiser, the “Scylla” had once handsomely beaten every previous record for prize-firing,—and the papers noted that she was commanded by a Captain Percy Scott. In 1902 Rear-Admiral Grenfell, in a “Report of Inspection” upon the great cruiser “Terrible” stated “For the last two years the ‘Terrible’s’ heavy Gun Prize Firing for all natures of guns has been by far the best of any ship in the Service,” — and the papers noted that she was commanded by Captain Percy Scott. About three years later a new post was created at the Admiralty, the Inspector of Gunnery; and the papers noted that the

first man to hold this important position was Rear Admiral Percy Scott. Then came a vacancy in the Mediterranean Fleet, already the premier shooting force in the Empire, and the man to be appointed to this important position was Vice-Admiral Sir Percy Scott. What if jealous people did call him a "crank"? he did not care. What if they jeered at his waste of ammunition? he knew that every charge ignited had sent a projectile clean through a target. What if his subordinates did complain of overwork? they were at least part and parcel of the most efficient naval force ever known.

And so Admiral Scott was elated at the idea of at last putting all his theories to the stern test of war. He knew it would mean practical annihilation, but he fancied he would be able to prove that even in these days of machinery the human element was still the most important factor. So he summoned his three junior Admirals and all the captains of the ships in his command and shortly laid the position before them. Not too much talk, but just enough to make them prouder than ever of their Chief.

At mid-day the squadron weighed and very imposing it looked too though, alas, far too small in regard to numbers. There were twelve first-class battleships in two columns of line ahead disposed to port, great ships eight of them, displacing all fifteen thousand tons; the other four had been built for China waters, and though well armed and speedy, were somewhat insufficiently protected. And with him were seven large armoured cruisers, high-bowed, speedy ships but, with the exception of the "Leviathan," carrying no gun larger than the obsolete six inch. West they steamed and soon had cleared the Straits; then north they steamed, and fifteen knots was their speed, for they had over twelve hundred miles to cover ere they met the enemy.

It was no surprise to the good folks of Worthing to see a great fleet appear over the horizon on Wednesday morning,—a fleet of at least two hundred vessels of all descriptions. The morning papers had led them to expect a landing somewhere in the vicinity, and so ample preparations had been made to give the invaders a warm and fitting reception. It is not proposed here to deal with that reception,—it is deserving of a more extensive notice later on; but let it be said that the first few hundred Germans to touch British soil did so at none of their own bidding. They were washed ashore, sucked back again by the retreating surges and once more cast high on the shingly beach,—dead! The good folk of Worthing were not to be called upon without so much as a visiting card and right well had they run keen eyes along glistening barrels and with steady fore-finger pulled the deadly trigger. No bad shots were they in those early days even and few houses remained intact in Worthing before a landing could be effected; for shell on shell had been sent hurtling against the pretty watering-place. Crash followed crash, and bang followed bang,—here they burst and there they burst, dealing out death and anguish with a generous speed. It could not last for ever and on Thursday morning all resistance had been crushed and the brave defenders driven inland there again to await the coming of the foe.

As soon as the last rifle shot had ceased, the work of debarkation began. First had come a small landing party of marines, speaking volubly in their guttural tongue; with fixed bayonets they ran down this street and that and found—no-one. But they did receive one or two little surprises. Where the drains crossed the roads, large charges of explosives had been hidden and so left that the tramping feet above would of a certainty

fire them ; nearly four hundred men were thus flung into eternity !

By nightfall the town had been occupied and the landing was in full swing beneath the glare of a dozen searchlights. Boatload after boatload, the uniformed Teutons were towed to the beach, where they climbed out, formed up and were promptly marched away to an allotted place. There was no worry, no hurry, no trouble ; the matter had been worked out to the utmost nicety before hand and the directions allowed of no error in execution.

One thing, however, had not been allowed for,—the courage of a single man. The brain of Germany's operations had known full well the menace of the Mediterranean Fleet, but had counted its units and compared the total to the German Navy with a certain smug satisfaction. "No," they had said, "the British may be brave,—but they are not foolhardy ; and to attack our fleet with their own would virtually amount to suicide."

And so Admiral Sir Percy Scott was left out of their calculation for a time.

There were one hundred and thirty transports with the fleet, large, slow craft but possessing enormous capacity. Every arm they carried, infantry, artillery and cavalry and the aggregate could not have been far short of one hundred and eighty thousand men. Round about this swarm of troop-ships lay the war-vessels, twenty-four huge battleships, half-a-dozen coast defence ships, three armoured cruisers and a good two score of smaller protected vessels and torpedo gunboats ; a veritable Armada, strong at any time but more than strong now that the British Fleet had to all intents and purposes disappeared. Busily they worked and well, for it seemed that every move had been closely studied ;

the rate of landing was astonishing, the average being at least three thousand men, all found and with necessary stores, per hour. Horses were quickly transhipped to flat-bottomed barges brought across for that especial purpose, guns were swung out and cases of ammunition loaded many feet high. All Thursday, all Thursday night, all Friday—no cessation, no stopping. To this day that landing remains a feat of generalship never equalled even by the Japanese. The chief officers were getting tired and looked with pleasure to the morrow, for they knew that by the Sabbath the whole force would have been placed on land. It was a colossal task, starting to land nearly two hundred thousand men on a Thursday morning and finishing before midday on Saturday! Yet it would have been done well within that time, if—ever the dreadful if—.

And this "if" was Admiral Sir Percy Scott.

On the journey north the grey leviathans of Britain had undergone certain noticeable changes. Their masts seemed short out of all proportion, their side-rails had been swung inboard; the engineers and indeed, all between decks complained of the stifling heat—the ventilators and cowls had been unshipped and stowed away. Great coils of rope were festooned around the top-most bar of all the bridges, the boats had become very many less, wood had ceased to exist (except for the decks), and comfort, to put it shortly, had been reduced to a minimum.

They were going into action stripped.

The Germans were at the highest pressure as darkness fell and the great white beams of the search-lights shone full on moving boats and snorting launches. Towards the sea a cordon of small cruisers steamed in endless beat from east to west and many there were who thought

their work a waste, judging the British lion to be cowed past all idea of organised resistance. Even the skippers of these small craft paid greater heed to all the bustle land-ward, than to the dark drear blackness of the southern horizon ; for what danger had they to anticipate ? At the most some torpedo craft, but that was unlikely, for though 'twas true these latter had wiped out nearly one hundred of Germany's mosquito fleet, scarce a one had gone back without a taste of a Krupp shell somewhere in her thin hull, and Krupp shell bite hard where they strike. Thus, lulled into a false sense of security, a none too keen watch was kept.

The clear skies had during two days become overcast and threatening and old sailors prophesied a storm in the near future of unusual severity. The gentle calm had not yet been broken and the air, hot and soft, held little of the pleasant briny freshness. Yet overhead sombre clouds banked up on every side, glowering around the firmament as some wild beast preparing for a terrible spring. Though so early in summer the night came down black and gloomy, the darkness thrown out in greater relief by the dazzling brilliance of the search-lights. On the beach, hustle and scurry ; on the sea,—quiet.

Boom !

A snarling roar split the soft night with painful violence ; a smart, cutting whistle smote cruelly on the ear.

Crash !!

Something struck the "Deutschland" fair at the base of her second funnel and exploded, spreading into a vast star of iridescent white flame. The whole ship seemed for a moment to be blotted out but soon the whiteness faded and there lay as before—but a different

"Deutschland," an altered "Deutschland," a shattered "Deutschland." Where three smoke-stacks had once stood there showed a gaping hole, and steam roared hell-like from the stricken vitals. Eight hundred and fifty pounds had that one shell weighed and eight hundred and fifty thousand pounds worth of damage had it done, for the "Deutschland" would never steam again.

Ah! how do you like the taste of that, Germany?

"Only a sighting shot," pleaded the young officer who had thus rudely called the attention of our foes to an awful danger at least fifty seconds before the Admiral had intended fire should be opened.

"And a d——d good shot, too," muttered the navigating lieutenant behind his hand, as the youngster stepped down from the bridge and hurried back to his post, hoping he might arrive before the now flying shells took it into their steelen heads to burst somewhere near him.

Two score German searchlights swung smoothly seawards and a vast pandemonium of clanking chains rung harshly amidst the prevailing din. The Germans were slipping their cables,—for an anchored ship cannot fight. Steam they had, of course, and in ten minutes the huge Teuton fleet ploughed slowly to the south to meet their daring foe. But during that ten minutes of inaction, much had happened.

The "Deutschland" for one, lay motionless, though firing an occasional gun when such chanced to bear. The "Siegfried," a coast defence vessel of over four thousand tons, had been pierced by a great projectile near the stern and turned straightway into the towering "Schleswig-Holstein," crashing with irresistible force through armour and side. A searchlight picked them up locked thus together and in a moment a perfect hail of

shot and shell alighted on and around the ill-fated ships. Already torn and shattered from upper-deck to keel, the twain dramatically fell apart, wallowed in the gentle swell for a short space and sank sizzling beneath the water.

The rest made an offing and with a good sea-room formed up to fight,—for numbers and strength were on their side. Yet as they ploughed towards their relentless enemy, the German Admiral noticed that these turned about and fled south, firing continually with their stern guns.

Bang! came the report, and crash! came the shell,—for Admiral Sir Percy Scott was proving that if he were mad, his madness had a nasty method, at all events. Farther steamed the British Fleet out to sea, farther and farther still and ever after them came the ponderous German ships, three to their one,—for in the British line were twelve in all,—of the armoured cruisers never a trace was seen.

Well they fought on both sides, but the British craft had a percentage of hits higher by double than their enemies,—but there could be but one ending to a contest so unequal. Fifteen times did Admiral Scott cross the German lines and pour in concentrated broadsides upon the leading foemen, until at last his speed forebade him more and he turned and awaited their coming, prepared to sell his life as dearly as he could. But he had already played his part well, better by far than the most sanguine would have expected of him with a force so inferior in point of numbers.

The gallant "Ocean" had disappeared, and the "Prince of Wales" was in a sinking condition. He knew not that the enemy had already lost no less than four of their battleships and one coast defence vessel,—

and cared less; what he did know was that he so impartially distributed his favours that none of the Germans would fight again before passing through Dockyard hands for a thorough over-haul.

And so, having drawn the opposing force over one hundred miles south-west of Worthing, he awaited them with a calm spirit. The dawn was just breaking and the light gave his gunners the very chance they so desired, for the enemy's ships stood out gaunt and grey against the brightening dawn.

At two thousand five hundred yards the combined broadsides crashed out together and the last phase had begun. The ten British ships stood up gallantly to the twenty of the Germans and gave never a cable as they steamed column to column, firing desperately.

Admiral Scott was on the remnant of his bridge and gazed joyfully towards the enemy,—the "Lothringen" and "Kaiser Wilhelm II." had dropped out of line, sinking. The thunderous roar was the sweetest music to him and it cheered him to note that his line was as yet unbroken. Then of a sudden the "Bulwark" turned to port, staggered and disappeared. But at the same moment a huge cloud of steam burst screaming from the "Mecklingburg" and before five could be counted the "Wettin" drove grinding into her balconied stern,—and immediately after the "Kaiser Karl der Grosse" was seen to be in difficulties; she left the line and in five minutes blew up with a deafening roar.

The Germans had now lost nine ships to the British three,—yet still they had fifteen to our nine.

As the sun rose gently behind the heavy clouds the Admiral, clinging wearily to a stanchion, pondered whether it would not be wise to cry, "Halt! it is enough." Daylight showed how fearful had been the

effects of the long action,—funnels pierced and shorn, masts gone by the board hanging by mere threads of steel. The "Irresistible" had a dangerous cant to port and started away towards the German line. She could not float for long, so her captain had decided to get as close as possible and do all the damage he could before his vessel sank. Straight on he steamed, the heel becoming ever greater, and as he went the Germans edged away, forming a crescent where once had been a column.

Something rasped somewhere,—a penetrating ear-splitting rasp; a shell had pierced to a German engine-room and left a ship devoid of motive power. It was the "Brandenburg" of 10,000 tons and her way dropped and dropped.

The English captain noticed and decided,—so the straining watchers, still firing but not so fiercely, saw the doomed "Irresistible" turn a little to port and slowly creep out towards the now motionless "Brandenburg"—nearer, nearer, nearer. The speed had fallen to five or six knots, for the waters had reached the furnaces. At three miles an hour they collided. For eighty seconds they hung, fixed at right-angles one with the other; then the "Irresistible" went of a sudden down by the stern, and as the bow rose the great ram ripped a vast gash in the stricken German ship.

And they sank together.

But a remarkable thing happened just then, a string of bunting broke out from an unshattered yard of the Teuton flagship "Hannover" and the whole force swung around and steamed off east. Admiral Sir Percy Scott had thoughts of pursuit,—then looked about him to see what he still had capable of steaming at any decent speed. The "Vengeance" was just capsizing as he scanned his squadron and the "London" and "Implac-

able" were both in a most precarious condition, the one heeling terribly to starboard and the other submerged a deck by the head.

So he signalled a westerly course and steamed gingerly for Plymouth, the nearest naval port. At eight knots he moved with all his remaining ships and eagerly peered astern,—for he expected his armoured cruisers to come up soon and he wished to hear whether their mission had been successful.

Worn out with long watching and anxiety, the Admiral at last went below and lay down for a few hours' well-earned repose. At midday an officer called him and reported four of the cruiser squadron coming up rapidly astern. He hastily bathed,—and never had sea water felt so delicious, so refreshing—then mounted on deck and was astonished to see how much had been done to remove the traces of battle during the short time he had been asleep. Also, he noted that but five vessels were with him now; and the sad story was told of how the "London" had turned turtle at midday quite unexpectedly and how, owing to the rough sea, the "Implacable" had been making water so badly that her captain had deemed it judicious to run for land and, if possible, beach her in shallow water. The sea was rising before a fresh breeze and he ordered speed to be increased to fourteen knots and was gratified to find all his ships still capable of maintaining as much as that. At 4.30 in the afternoon, the Eddystone Lighthouse hove in sight and by six o'clock his sadly reduced force was moving slowly past Drake's Island towards the Dockyard,—and from the Hoe and Devil's Point countless thousands yelled a welcome to him and his brave men. But Admiral Sir Percy Scott did not know yet whether he had been successful or had failed. The armoured cruisers held

that secret,—though it was no secret to the people on shore,—and the Admiral tarried not until he had reached the cabin of his friend the Rear-Admiral of the Third Cruiser Squadron and from his own lips heard the story of Germany's first great set-back.

CHAPTER XV.

What happened at Worthing.

It is a strange fact that in all works of fiction dealing with future wars, and in which an invasion of these Isles is attempted, the rising town of Worthing is almost invariably chosen for the hostile landing. Be that as it may, in this instance the fiction became a stern reality and startled the towns-folk mightily, for two hundred ships make a brave display, especially when it is known that the navy upon which their destruction should have depended lay deep in the Solent mud. Yet though startled, Worthing was not surprised—common sense had for two days been emptying the town of its women-folk and children, and there remained but the men.

A certain veteran soldier, affectionately known as "Bobs," had once suggested public rifle ranges for the people—small indoor rifle ranges of one to two hundred feet in length, and his idea had been eagerly followed up by patriotic financiers. In a few years scarce a town of any size was without its miniature rifle range, some having two, some four and even more. Here, night after night, came men of every station and with Morris Tubes mounted steadily from a succession of palpable misses to a long run of "bulls" and "inners." The system bred a national enthusiasm, and inter-town competition gave birth to a healthy rivalry that did far to advance the cause advocated by Lord Roberts of Kandahar. Soon a serviceable rifle was put on the market at a ridiculously low figure and in thousands these were bought up; for just as formerly every man

must have his own tin-cased billiard cue, now it was *de rigueur* to possess your own rifle. Fitted with Morris Tubes they served for practice—without the tubes they served for war.

Now Worthing had three ranges, and had come well to the fore in the last two years having handsomely beaten Southsea (the "crack" team of the Southern Counties) and carried off a much coveted shield. So when dread war burst of a sudden upon an astonished people, they displayed a business-like desire to get to work at the enemy, and even the few to whom national defence had never been but a phrase bought rifles, guns and revolvers and sought instruction from the nearest neighbours.

And during the two days of grace allowed them, the Worthing towns-men made preparation for the coming foe. Flag-stones were raised from the esplanade and balanced tightly against the metal railings, whilst five feet of earth was piled up behind this novel defence. Slots were left for rifles and all that could be done, was done. A smart general-officer came down from the head-quarters and felt gratified that he should have been chosen to command so fine a set of men. But he saw the weakness of the position and hurried off several thousand men to dig pits and trenches upon the Downs surrounding the town—and in front of these had placed great net works of barbed wire. He saw visions of *defense à la Russe*, but wished to go one better.

On Wednesday, the 9th, at 10 a.m., vast clouds of smoke were seen on the horizon by the anxious watchers and soon the forest of alien masts was clearly and distinctly noticed steering directly for the land. At eleven the northern battle-ships cast anchor, allowing the transports to steam in past them as near as they could

to the land. Through their glasses the German officers saw numbers of people parading the streets as though nothing exceptional were taking place, whilst bare-armed workmen dug slowly behind the raised flagstones in full view of the enemy.

"Ach! they are cool, these English. They take no notice of us, and as usual are repairing their roads!" so said one Teuton lieutenant as he snapped his glasses into their case.

The General in command of the Worthing men was no fool; he desired to allay all suspicion—and well he succeeded. Without delay the Germans set about their debarkation, intending to utilise the whole length of the beach and about two miles on either side for the operation. But there were twenty thousand Englishmen to be reckoned with first, and though but two thousand of these wore His Majesty's uniform, they all carried a trusty rifle and one hundred ball-cartridges. In one particular, too, every man resembled Admiral Sir Percy Scott—they objected to pulling a trigger without hitting something in return.

At midday a salvo of shells was sent tearing and crashing through the hotels and villas facing the sea, one great projectile taking a span out of the pier, as a warning doubtless, of what would be meted out to the luckless town in the event of resistance. A searching fire was also directed against the esplanade and all sheltered positions on either side of it. Several breaches were made,—but not a man was injured, for they all lay hid in bomb proof pits covered over with paving-stones. After this preliminary, a huge concourse of boats, laden with men and guns, put off from the great fleet of transports and, towed by launches, rapidly approached the shore.

The word passed down the line, "Wait till they land, then three volleys, fix bayonets and charge!"

"Better than selling calico by the foot, Jim!" murmured a cheery young draper's assistant, as he flicked a speck of dust off his back-sight with a gaudy handkerchief.

"Oh, cheese it, Willie," returned the other, somewhat anxious with prolonged waiting, "what you'll want will be lint, by the yard."

"Silence there," hissed an officer, as a harsh grating sounded from above—then,

"Up to your places, fixed sights, aim low and fire at the word."

About a thousand Germans had leapt ashore and were pulling their heavy boats up the beach to disembark the guns and ammunition. At short intervals squads were forming up to rush the beach and kill any defender behind the esplanade. Perhaps eighty seconds elapsed between the touching of the boats and the charge of the men up the slippery shingle. A long line of rifles shot out from the barricade of paving stones and the German officers, waving high their swords, shouted loudly—

"Vorwärts!!"

Three steps had they gone, when all down the English line came the one word,

"Fire!!"

An unbroken series of flashes shot out and the advancing enemy staggered in their stride. Again the dread order, and this time the attackers halted—they could not face the awful wall of death. A third command, and turning they bolted back to the boats. But not in time—a fiendish howl of delight rose from behind them and down upon their backs tore a wild crowd of

Englishmen, with rifles hipped and bayonets tightly fixed.

Hurrah! they yelled, a mad blood-curdling hurrah!

Now they are into them, stabbing and fending—aye! and over them, into the boats themselves. Two great swings and over went one boat, then another, and Maxims and field-pieces lay all manner of ways upset in the shallow water.

Zsiz! Psizz! Tzing!!! went the keen-pointed bayonets through quivering human flesh and soon the wavelets lashed red the white pebble-stones of the sloping beach.

"Giddy work, Bill," yelled a sturdy labourer, drawing his bloody blade from a fat Teuton neck.

"Gawds treuth, mate, that it is—ough! tike that, you German sausage, and dam your cheek for comin' 'ere."

In ten minutes it was over, and half the number of boats were flying hot haste back to the fleet—but they left six hundred dead and drowned lying as sea-weed by the water's edge. And England paid her toll, for eighty poor fellows would never again see those most dear to them. When finally driven off, the brave defenders ran back to their shelter and poured volley after volley into the retreating boats until they had steamed beyond range. The result was of course to be anticipated; every vessel commenced a terrible shell-fire at the roughly constructed barricades, but, as had been proved in the Hispano-American and Russo-Japanese wars, ships could do little damage to shore works. True, they tore up the road-way, cracked the huge slabs, bent the steel railing, completely destroyed the pier, and started half a dozen disastrous fires—but they did not succeed in driving the brave band of Englishmen out of their hastily constructed but well-planned trenches.

Damage they did, of course, but when later they came to occupy the shattered and charred township, the Germans wished they had been less liberal with their fire-bringing missiles. Yet so concentrated a fire could not fail to find victims, and what with deadly blasts of burning shells and steel splinters, another three-score of the gallant rifle-men met their deaths. They had, luckily, no lack of food or drink, each man having brought sufficient and more than sufficient to last a good two days,—and longer than this they could not hope to hold out. When the fire from the sea had ceased and the whole front lay waste and shattered, a second contingent of Germans set out for the shore. This time they held off at five hundred yards, and with crackling machine-guns searched every nook and cranny of the stone-faced esplanade. Here occurred the worst casualties, over three hundred poor fellows falling to the greedy bullets. After a few minutes of this the enemy steamed forward, and, as before, leapt out, formed up and charged.

Again the furious volleys,—a little more scattered perhaps,—again the fatal hesitation. Somewhere down the British line, a lithe young form leapt forward with Union Jack waving from his rifle. A great burst of cheering followed and, as corn emptied from a sack, the English streamed pell-mell out upon the beach. Here swords and revolvers came into play, the Teutons standing their ground with the utmost hardihood. But British pluck gained the day,—though the price of victory was very great indeed.

Back went the Germans, beaten from one end of the line to the other—and this time the dead numbered over a thousand. And then again came that awful bombardment, heart breaking and nerve-rending in its dread

intensity ; thrice did it happen thus through the coming night, and still the enemy had gained no foothold. They had tried every possible device, even sending forces of a few hundred several miles each way down the coast, yet on every hand they met the same strenuous opposition and went back to the ships disheartened. During the night, too, a squadron of ten destroyers from Portsmouth made a fierce torpedo attack on the German fleet, —but after sinking two small transports and a third class cruiser, every one was destroyed. In the early morning, the British General ordered a retirement of nine-tenths of his remaining forces to the prepared trenches upon the commanding ridges behind the town. He had been informed that a division of regulars with several batteries of guns had arrived and that further resistance at the water's edge was not necessary, besides being too costly. So next morning at daybreak the enemy found the rifle-fire much diminished when, after the sixth bombardment they sent forward the eighth landing party. But before the remaining British riflemen left, they had emptied their cartridge-belts with painful results to their foe.

That day Worthing was occupied.

CHAPTER XVI.

Getting our hand in.

A well known Baronet, who does not desire his name to be made public, has a sailor son, at the beginning of the war a lieutenant in H.M.S. Lancaster. From him he received the following letter which, through the courtesy of the writer I am enabled to reproduce, for it gives an account of the work done by the Third Cruiser Squadron from the point of view of an eye-witness:—

“ My dear old Dad,

“ Since I last wrote we have had no end of a time. By Jove, I never thought five days ago that we were to take part in a stiff action,—indeed the war came as an absolute surprise to us. The Admiral had a cable on Tuesday morning (about six o'clock, I understand), and by breakfast time we all knew that Germany was looking for trouble. It was not until two hours later however that we learnt that our ships at Spithead had gone to the bottom and we were no end mad, I can tell you. But, we hadn't time to grouse, for in a brace of shakes every vessel unable to lie along the Mole had a couple of barges lashed alongside and we started whipping in as much coal as we could stow, and a bit more as well. The rumour went round that we were to steam north at once and bash William's fleet to pieces, and we looked forward to the action. It was curious to notice how calmly we officers and the men took the sudden transition from peace to war; only a little more spring about the men's movements and a little more merriment in their conversation. Our old man was

signalled aboard the 'Formidable' and went off hot haste to hear what Scottie had to say; he wasn't away more than forty minutes, so the interview was evidently short and sweet. As our bunkers were already nearly cram full, it only took up three hours to squeeze a bit in odd corners, and we were to weigh at midday. At eleven all barges were cast off and we received orders to drop all boats with the exception of a steam pinnace apiece. Then came 'strip wood fittings' and good Gad! you should have seen the men go at it. I managed to pack off most of my little odds and ends in one of the boats and so they are waiting for me at Gib. when next we call in,—and goodness knows when that will be.

"At eight bells it was up and away and no sooner had we cleared the land than the whole squadron settled down to a steady fifteen knots. And we had plenty to do to fill in the time, I can tell you. Most important of all was the towing target practice, just to keep our eyes in. Scottie's a devil for guns and in shooting we reckon we're pegs ahead of any of the other squadrons, or rather, than they were before the disaster. Rattling good practice was made, especially when the speed at which we were moving is considered. One of our men got a maximum,—poor devil, he's dead now, but we officers are getting up a sub. for his wife and kiddies, and if you like you can send a tenner along for yourself. We gathered that the Admiral intended using us as battleships but we should have been jolly little use with only our six-inchers against anything large of the Germans. As it turned out we were wanted for something better and we happened to come in very useful in the end. We had been steaming for three days and anticipated picking up some news by the "wireless" which would give us a hint where to find the "Dutchmen" without having to

waste good coal and time in scouting about for them. But nothing turned up until Friday at two o'clock in the afternoon (you wouldn't understand it if I said 'four bells,' would you?), when the 'Leviathan' spotted a destroyer bearing down hell for leather towards us and signalling like the deuce. Soon we made out the word 'Despatches' and at once the Admiral hoisted a general signal to drop speed to eight knots. The sea was like a mill-pond so the destroyer, the 'Mohawk' from Devonport, ran alongside the 'Formidable' and her skipper clambered on board.

"We weren't kept long in suspense; our skipper again went with the other captains on board the flagship, and on his return called us in and told us that the Germans were landing at Worthing and that we were to step in and take them by surprise if possible. I felt a bit squeamish I must admit when he told us they had no less than thirty-two armoured ships to our nineteen and goodness only knew how many smaller fry as well. The plan arranged was, for the battleships to steam in and suddenly open fire; then, having got the enemy on the move, retreat slowly towards the south-west and try to draw them away from the transports and cruisers. If they succeeded in this, our seven armoured cruisers were to go headlong for these and do as much damage as we could before getting wiped out of existence. Our skipper didn't mince matters either, and he let us know very distinctly that he did not anticipate one of us seeing port again, and in view of the terrible odds against us it seemed hopeless from the start.

"However, we're pretty good with the guns in this fleet, and thought we should leave a mark on most of the German ships before getting sunk. We allowed the battleships to get ahead and steamed slowly east, the

idea being to bear down on Worthing two hours after the battleship action had commenced. Between ten and eleven on Friday we saw the reflexion of a searchlight away on the western horizon, and immediately afterwards a dull boom came down the wind, to be instantly followed by a rapid succession of great explosions. We were twenty miles away at the time and so saw very little, as you can imagine, but we could at least notice that the sounds veered more and more south and became every moment fainter. We commenced steaming in towards the shore and in an hour could see Worthing and the shipping around; evidently the invaders did not anticipate a second attack, for they were carrying on the debarkation beneath a brilliant illumination of arc-lamps and searchlights. We could make out three large armoured cruisers and five coast-defence ships of the 'Heimdal' class, recently reconstructed. There were also a score or so of small cruisers and several torpedo craft, but we didn't take much stock of them. As a fact, our admiral gave us jolly little time to see anything, for before you could say 'Jack Robinson' we were at 'em like a terrier at a rat.

"What really happened from that minute is still a haze in my mind and I couldn't give a consecutive account and then swear it was true even if my life depended on it. All I know is we spread out so as to give one another plenty of working room and then went at it hammer and tongs. The 'Leviathan' and 'Kent' went for the armoured cruisers and in less than three minutes we heard a fearful crash and found the 'Kent' had gone smack into the great 'Fürst Bismarck,'—a much more powerful ship but not good for more than sixteen knots at the best. Of course ramming was wrong tactically, but it was essential for our plans to

disable the large cruisers and by Gad! didn't the 'Leviathan' take it out of the 'Prince Adalbert'? It was a treat to watch them and soon I saw the German ship had had enough. The 'Kent' and her enemy were slowly sinking, but the captain of the former managed to get off a torpedo just as the disabled 'Adalbert' was passing at a range of no more than six hundred yards. It kicked up a smother, I can tell you, and the three ships went down in a blaze of fire and foam too terrible to describe.

"But we were hard at it ourselves. The smaller cruisers and coast-defence ships had all been either speedily sunk or driven to sea, where they fled after the battle-fleet,—a course followed by the remaining armoured cruiser, the 'Friederick Karl,' and so we set to work on the transports. It was gory work and not over dangerous, but the unfortunate 'Donegal' went ashore and while fixed thus a d—d German skipper of a lumbering coal-hulk went full pelt for her sides. Of course the collier doubled up and sank in a jiffy, but not before driving a forty foot hole into the 'Donegal's' side. We took fifty minutes to clear the roads of hostile shipping, using torpedoes whenever we got a chance. Most of the Germans tried to run their ships ashore and as we drew a great deal more water than most of them we had to plunk into them with six inch high-explosive shells and these soon set them burning. Amongst others was the 'Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse,' the largest of all an' easily distinguishable by her four funnels. Half a dozen six inch guns had been mounted in her and she caused quite a lot of damage before a torpedo from the 'Essex' sent her ashore to avoid sinking; we then steamed around her stern and fired about thirty shells clean through her and in a trice she was ablaze

fore and aft. The old 'Bremen' fouled the 'Barbarossa' and whilst they hung caught up we made rare good practice at them. Every now and then one or other of them blew up, some of the ammunition forming the cargo catching alight. After two hours of 'finishing off,' as you might say, the Admiral signalled 'cease fire' and we set a course west after the battle-fleets, wondering whether we should meet and be wiped out by the returning Germans.

"Leaving the roadstead we had a piece of dreadful luck. We never suspected the Germans of mining the position and went full pelt out the shortest cut, and the poor old 'Essex' hit a mechanical mine fair and square and rose nearly straight with the shock. We stopped at once and lowered our few remaining boats but she had sunk in three minutes and of her crew of nearly 700 only ninety-two were found afloat. So the game in the end was as follows:—

"To us were two armoured cruisers, one coast-defence ship ('Beowulf'), four small cruisers ('Arcona,' 'Gazelle,' 'Ariadne,' and 'Gefion'), one torpedo-gunboat ('Hela'), and about one hundred and thirty liners, transports, colliers, repair-ships, etc., against our loss of three county class, the 'Kent,' 'Essex,' and 'Donegal.' In men it is reckoned we lost just over two thousand, killed, wounded and missing, but the Germans must have lost at least sixty thousand troops, three thousand sailors and heaven knows how many civilians employed in one capacity or another. Their material loss must run into many millions of pounds, for not more than two thirds of the cargoes had been discharged when we came upon them.

"I have a bad left arm, a small splinter having opened a five inch cut in the fleshy part just below the elbow, but the doc. says it is getting on nicely. They put half

a dozen stitches in it and it looks very healthy to-day so neither the mater nor you need feel in any way nervous. I don't expect to get off to see you for a long time yet as all our ships got pretty well knocked about, and as we constitute 'England's last Hope' so to speak, we are doing our best to get things put straight as speedily as possible.

"I hear from one of Scottie's men that he gave them awful beans and though only five of our ships reached here it was the Germans that ran away and not ourselves,—what would be called a moral victory, I suppose. We feel awfully helpless here in the service, for we have plenty of men but no ships and of course the Dockyard's too dreadfully overworked, every dock having a ship in it. There is one thing about it which is satisfactory,—the amount of damage below the water-line is in no case very great and so three or four days will be sufficient for docking, overhauling, repairing and cleaning most of the ships. But in the meantime there is not a single powerful ship we can send out and the Germans have a free run of the coast. It is sickening, I can tell you. Well, I suppose we must hope for the best,—but I pity the Germans if we get the upper hand again; we intend to sink or capture everything afloat bearing the German flag even down to yachts, so that if their seaside trippers want an hour's sail they'll have to go to France. By the bye, they must be in a poor way in France if Kaiser William is able to hold their fleet in hand merely with the threat of invasion. Still, we would much rather attend to the matter ourselves and there is no doubt in the minds of any of us who is coming out top-dog in the end. It all depends on how long it will take to get up the ships at Portsmouth and whether we can hold the place while they are being repaired."

The rest of the letter dealt with personal matters and generalities and has no permanent interest here. It will at all events be seen that our foe were not having things all their own way, and that Englishmen still know how to fight.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Stemming of the Tide.

The situation at the end of the eventful week beginning June 7th was admirably summed up in a leader that appeared on Monday, 14th June, in one of our best known daily papers.

"THE SITUATION.

"It is now seven days since the Germans thrust war "upon the British Nation by a trick as cowardly as it "was unparalleled. In this short time many things have "happened and perhaps the most striking feature of all "these has been the comparative failure of the German "plans. We now know that our enemy anticipated a "complete paralysis of both our naval and military forces "and hoped ere any semblance of defence could be "organised to have so swept the southern counties as to "leave all idea of our ultimate victory out of the "question.

"For our part, crushing as is the blow to our naval "supremacy, we never thought other than that, given "time, we should sweep the daring invaders into the "sea. No time was lost in meeting the disaster as it "should be met, and the gallant defence of Worthing, "with the naval action of Admiral Sir Percy Scott has "so delayed the German plans that any advantage they "hoped to obtain by the surprise has altogether "vanished. The three days delay in landing and the "destruction of all their heavy field artillery and a large "proportion of their supplies, gave Lord Kitchener time "to organise a solid defence across the Surrey Downs.

" This advance line of entrenchment, well equipped as " it is with field and machine guns, has successfully held " in check the hundred thousand Germans landed last " week, but when these have been reinforced by the " second army of invasion, even now disembarking at " Worthing and totalling at a modest computation one " hundred and fifty thousand men, there is little doubt " our brave citizen soldiers will be forced to retire to the " next line of trenches, hurriedly being thrown up on " selected positions some miles further north west.

" It must not be supposed that we decry the danger " to our native land,—far from it. But we would wish " to assure our readers that everything possible is being " done to safeguard the metropolis, and more especially " Portsmouth. It is upon Portsmouth indeed that our " future hopes are based, and from all we can gather the " first objective of the Germans will be our premier naval " port. If we can hold Portsmouth, (and we firmly " believe we can and shall do so), until a dozen of our " sunken vessels have been repaired, we shall speedily " reverse the present position. Let us not forget that, " according to the latest telegrams, no less than eleven of " Germany's best ships have been totally destroyed " leaving them but thirteen vessels of the first class and " many of these badly damaged. A blockade is " obviously quite out of the question with so insignificant " a force, so that as regards the importation of food- " stuffs no fears need be entertained as to the future. " Their command of the sea is at the best nominal, " since at the present moment it is maintained by less " than a dozen armoured ships of true fighting value.

" As we go to press, rumours reach us of another naval " disaster, it being reported that two of the Chatham " Reserve Squadron have been blown up with all hands.

"In the absence of definite information we can make
"no comment, but pray the statement may have no
"foundation in fact."

On the same page, in immense black headlines,
appeared the following piece of bad news:—

"Naval Disaster Off Margate.

"H.M.S. 'Revenge' and 'Trafalgar' Blown Up with
"All Hands.

"H.M.S. 'Victorious' Beached in Sinking Condition.

"The following has been circulated by the Admir-
alty:—

"We regret to report that whilst outward-bound from
"Sheerness the six vessels of the Chatham Reserve
"Fleet ran into a mine-field at the entrance to the
"Duke of Edinburgh Channel. The 'Revenge,' flag-
"ship of Rear-Admiral Moring, was leading and struck
"two mines simultaneously, one blew both propellers
"away and she was drifting towards the sands when a
"third exploded under her counter. She at once sank
"in shallow water and of her crew only sixty have been
"saved. We regret to say Rear-Admiral Moring is
"among the missing. H.M.S. 'Trafalgar' exploded a
"mine with her ram and plunged under water in mid-
"channel. One hundred and seventy only of her crew
"were rescued, including Captain Birt-Jones; she lies
"on an even keel in seven fathoms. The remaining
"vessels of the squadron, H.M.S. 'Victorious,' 'Royal
"Sovereign,' 'Empress of India,' and 'Nile' evaded the
"peril, and backed away from the supposed dangerous
"area. In doing so a mine exploded alongside H.M.S.
" 'Victorious,' and to save her from sinking Captain
"Herbert beached the ship close to the Knob Light.
"The three remaining vessels returned to Sheerness

"without further mishap. The mines had evidently been sown by German ships, since on investigation the officials at Sheerness have discovered a large number "in the Mid-Deep, Barrow Deep, Black Deep and Princes Channel. Steps are being taken to immediately remove the dangerous obstructions."

Was ever such a bolt from the blue?

England had surely suffered enough without this additional catastrophe. Gradually the truth leaked out, little by little; Rear-Admiral Moring had been ordered to sea with our only remaining undamaged battleships to give battle to any German vessels to be found. It was hoped he might destroy the few old armoured coast-defence vessels protecting Worthing and then with any ships he still had afloat sail north and await the battleship-squadron of our foes. The policy was a right one,—to destroy as many of the enemy's ships as possible at whatever cost to ourselves,—and for this reason. When Germany lost a ship it meant losing a very appreciable portion of her Navy. She had, to all intents and purposes, no old vessels, no "second-line" upon which to rely. In England there were at least a score, probably double that number, of first-class ships only requiring time and hard-work to make them as serviceable as ever. But when it came to the time for them to act it would facilitate their work if in the interim continuous attacks had weakened their foe. Two things were necessary therefore; never-ceasing attempts to sink or disable the German vessels and a sturdy defence of Portsmouth to permit the efficient repair of the least damaged warships.

The situation was pregnant with possibilities for both sides, our foeman quite readily grasping the threatened danger to themselves. Suspecting therefore an attack

by Admiral Moring's squadron, they had besprinkled the mouth of the Thames most generously with mechanical contact mines, with the result already narrated. Of protected cruisers we had many score, but without the support of armoured ships they could have availed us nothing. The whole energy of those in authority was therefore directed upon the protection of Portsmouth, and to this end vast armies of men laboured night and day whilst the soldiers of England, both orthodox and self-constituted, held the foe at arms length along the grass-covered hills. Yet ever the task grew harder, for every day came fresh legions and as each transport became empty she started back for a further load of men and munitions. And as convoy in this work there were four second-class battleships of 7,400 tons and six powerful coast-defence ships, besides several great armoured cruisers. The most we could do was to badger the small convoys with our fast scouts and destroyers, and on three occasions lucky torpedoes sent many thousands pounds worth of warlike goods to the sea-bottom and robbed Germany of many thousand gallant men. Yet when the month of June was drawing to a close, the foreign legions had grown enormously. Moreover they seized Bournemouth, then Poole and eventually Portland and formed another and safer base, —safe from the attacks of our active torpedo-craft and not open to the sea as Worthing roads. Portland had been well mined by us ere leaving and two transports with the coast-defence ship "Hagen" were blown sky high before the attendant tugs and launches had swept the harbour safe. On June 28th, too, four of the repaired German battleships appeared off Bournemouth, proving that their damage at least could not have been very great.

Every day more men came,—every day. Yet every day was one step nearer salvation for us. Portsmouth was each hour being rendered a harder nut to crack and whilst step by step the German forces won their way from the east and from the west, so hourly were guns being mounted, trenches dug, redoubts formed, etc.; to oppose the foe when at last the Naval port should be completely surrounded. It is worthy of note that the Germans paid no attention whatsoever to London and were quite content to hold in check the many army corps sent against them. They realized that to insure victory it was essential to absolutely destroy Britain's naval power; this they had only partly accomplished and unless it were efficiently completed, even the capture of London would not save them from ultimate defeat. Moreover, there was a further important factor,—the Japanese were sending their fleet to help their Allies in the hour of stress; was not their Emperor shut up a prisoner in the Island? had not some of their finest ships been sunk by the insolent Germans?

And so with the best part of their fleet and a land force of 150,000 men, the Japanese were setting out for a long journey west. The Suez Canal had been cunningly blocked early in the war by a huge German steamer and blasting had merely made the obstruction more complete. So the Japs were coming round the Cape.

Germany trembled when it heard that this fleet had left, and swore to take Portsmouth; that accomplished they need fear no one for they could raise and add to their own fleet the huge English ships, just as Japan had done at Port Arthur. Yet there was no time to lose if victory was to be theirs.

Germany trembled!

Then America offered to help England,—to come and “lick up their derned Navy” and send a few thousand of her best men to “clean up a bit on land.” The answer was awaited with much anxiety by both sides and then came the never to be forgotten head-line that filled every paper bill,

ENGLAND REFUSES AMERICA'S HELP!

There could be no doubt about it,—there it was officially in black and white. The British Public fumed, and swore the Government had gone mad, swore a lot of other things equally silly, swore that America would never forgive us and so on,—and so on.

Yet, strange as it may appear, America appreciated our answer and out came their own head-lines; we can't touch them for head lines in England, and they passed and surpassed themselves on this occasion.

Great Britain's Gorgeous Grit.

England Says She'll Give Germans Hell

God Help The Germans; They'll Want It Soon.

We're Right Proud of You, England. Give 'Em Hell.

Bully For The Brits! They'll Round Germany Up
Alone.

John Bull Full Of Fight; Jonathan To See Fair Play.

These are but a sample. England would fight it out alone,—it was nobody's affair but her own and she was

quite capable of dealing with it. Germany heard the answer as soon almost as we knew it.

And Germany trembled more than ever ! !

Curiously enough defeat became a tabooed word in the Clubs of Germany from that day. Prior thereto it was used frequently,—in connection with England; but now any man using it was scowled into silence. They were beginning to grasp a forgotten fact, forgotten by them that is, that though you may throw mud at the British Lion and twist his tail to your heart's content, you must *not* pull it out by the roots. Then, too, they had judged Britain's fighting capabilities by certain none too meritorious incidents of the South African Campaign. They forgot that in those dark days we had not been to war for a generation, that we had to transport our troops over six thousand miles of sea, that we had traitors, in our own camp, aye! even of high political standing, that our Intelligence Department had been sadly misled, that our enemy were defending hearth and home and resorted to any dastardly methods that occurred to them however contrary to the laws of civilization. All these things they forgot and this further; that since those days the War Office had been reorganised, rifle-clubs had sprung into existence all over the country, little Englanders did not exist (or if they did, dared not admit it) and lastly every man was fighting for his native land and took it as a personal insult that any dirty alien should have dared land without a duly certified pass from the local inspector of nuisances.

One curious feature of the situation was the attitude of the European nations towards us. Russia had by her Alliance with Germany, given our foes the free hand they desired outside their native land and the weight of this Alliance, held out as a menace around the French

borders, effectually prevented our friends on the other side of the Channel from offering us the aid they would have liked to give us. For, as their papers pertinently put it, "what use is it to save London, if by so doing we lose Paris?"

And the argument, backed up by the ever present menace, was quite unanswerable. As to the minor Powers, the action of Germany and its seeming complete success entirely silenced their protests, though their editors and leader-writers hurled scathing comments broad-cast at the perfidious Teuton. Italy was staunchly for us, but dared not voice the sentiments of her people,—for Austro-Hungary was in transition and the Kaiser claimed a Sovereignty here also now that the aged Emperor had joined the vast majority.

The Austrian Fleet, ever increasing, was in spite of its size, considered one of the most efficient afloat, and memories of Lissa lingered yet in fair Italia where the tightened purse-strings had strangled many a naval-programme designed to put the Mediterranean Power once again in the fore-front of naval nations. Russia's share of the campaign consisted mainly in publishing huge threats against our Indian frontier and in watching with some two million ill-conditioned troops the countries most antagonistic to the Russo-German Alliance. Of ships she had but few, though four battleships building in German yards had been requisitioned by her ally at cost price,—as also sundry vessels constructed in America and France. They were powerful units and in German hands likely to prove very dangerous enemies. Of America we have already spoken, and Germany took good care not to interfere with American trade for fear of dragging Brother Jonathan into the ring against the wishes of John Bull. Hence, famine, so long

dreaded in such circumstances, happily proved but a myth, and where factories had perforce to shut down, the employées found ample work under the Government in either perfecting defences or as soldiers.

And these defences were of two natures. The first and most important, having discovered the objective of the invaders, was to secure Portsmouth and to this end no less than sixty thousand laboured continuously night and day. The second defence was around London, since the Metropolis had to be kept from violation at the hands of the enemy. This defence was more a matter of men than science, and safety of the city depended more upon the resistance offered by the half million men organised for that purpose than upon fixed defences and fortifications.

With Portsmouth, however, the matter was entirely different. Here high hills surround the town and harbour to the north, north-east and part of the west, whilst from the sea the Isle of Wight effectually prevented an enemy from bombarding the mainland. And on these hills, two belts of forts and batteries were constructed and the position of these so carefully selected that there was not one that at critical times could not be assured the support of at least one neighbouring stronghold.

At Port Arthur, around which so much interest centred during the Russo-Japanese War, the fortifications were, at the commencement of hostilities, so immature, that had the Japanese immediately landed ten thousand men, the fortress must have fallen during the first month of the campaign. Yet it did not in fact surrender until nearly twelve months afterwards and this was due to the rapidly constructed defences, hurriedly completed while the yellow foemen were held at bay and made to fight their

way forward step by step. But at Port Arthur many things were against the Russians ; the harbour itself is in the nature of a rat-trap and can be bombarded from the sea on two sides, the whole defence was of barely fifty thousand men, a strict blockade was kept and hence little gun-running successfully carried out and lastly—they were Russians, fighting because they were told to fight, devoid of patriotism and badly led.

With us the situation was much better—Portsmouth is one of the best equipped naval arsenals in the world and the where-with-all to construct a series of really formidable defences was ready at hand. And labour was unlimited,—this, with a very perfect organisation to superintend matters meant much indeed. The main line of defence, starting from the eastern side, began on Hayling Island, where four batteries equipped with numerous quickfirers had been erected on the low-lying shore facing West Wittering. These lay back somewhat from a line of earth works and batteries along West Thorney Island which indeed they were intended to support. On this side, therefore, the English outposts were about eight miles from the Dockyards, and as it was not anticipated the enemy would attempt to breach the defence at this point, the distance was considered adequate. From Thorney Island the defences ran north beside Emsworth, the famous home of luscious natives, and between this picturesque old town and the Ashdean Fort on Walderton Down stretched at least six miles of flat field-broken land, bad to defend and hard to attack. In this six miles lay the main weakness of the garrison, though a similar situation existed on the western boundary. Here the experience of South Africa came to our aid, and every mile or less a block-house, built of stone or steel, was erected ; a cramped, uncomfortable

habitation capable of holding about two small quick-firers and the same number of machine guns. On the summit of each was perched a searchlight worked by a little petrol motor from within. The garrison lived in a small wooden cottage at all except times of attack and were being constantly relieved owing to the strain of guarding so responsible a position. Five of these were there between Thorney and the hills and between them were dug deep trenches, with bomb proof shelters and mounded redoubts. Opposite these trenches and raised earth-works the land was levelled away for a mile,—no very great business since already much of it was very flat. Maxims were plentifully besprinkled along these redoubts and the stretch was constantly garrisoned with between three or four thousand men. At the rear of the trenches was a second line and in front of them also lay sectioned earthworks, all strongly held by picked men. Therefore, though this particular spot was considered weak, it was of such real strength that after three fruitless mass attacks upon it the Germans left it well alone.

At Walderton Down began the zone of forts,—what may be termed permanent fortifications. These, on the northern border, were in two distinct lines, though on the east the two lines merged into one. The outer line, from Droxford Battery in the west to Ashdean Fort was made up of thirteen forts and batteries placed on commanding hills over-looking the main valleys of approach. The second line, from West Walk Battery just north of the village of Wickham to Inholmes Copse Fort, included fifteen powerful redoubts. This inner line was so constituted that in the event of any of the first line forts being captured the enemy would find them untenable owing to a terrible cross-fire. All attention had, of course, first been paid to the outer line of defences, so

that when the enemy came in touch therewith, they might be held whilst the inner was completed and made as impregnable as possible.

Every method of legitimate warfare was skilfully employed by our chiefs,—staked pits were dug in weak places and protected by barbed-wire entanglements dominated by machine-guns, whilst in other localities powerful land mines were buried capable of blowing up several acres at a time. Searchlights there were in plenty and to aid the defenders, such of the sunken vessels as the Admiralty did not immediately propose raising, were mercilessly robbed of guns, ammunition and even torpedoes.

Port Arthur had not been defended in vain, as the Germans were to discover to their cost.

From Wickham to the mouth of the river Meon the defence was similar to that on the east side,—block-house and entrenchments; but here the river materially helped the defenders and made a natural barricade of no ordinary strength. Thousands of tons of ammunition were taken around the forts and blockhouses, and in the trenches and bomb-proofs, cases of deadly hand-grenades were stored away ready for action when the fighting became hand to hand.

But all this work took time and the defence was not declared complete, as far as human ingenuity could make it so, until the end of August, nearly three months after hostilities had commenced. During this time much had happened; in the first place the Japanese fleet was now well on its way west, having already reached Ceylon after a five week journey. When the great concourse of ships forming this fleet is taken into consideration, it is not surprising that the progress made was comparatively slow. Then, too, the army of invasion had grown

exceedingly and the enemy had secured their position at Worthing by occupying Brighton and New Haven. A million and a quarter Teuton fighting men had set foot on British soil and the whole of Sussex, Kent, Dorset, Wiltshire and nearly all Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey was in their hands. Beyond that they could not extend their lines, the British nation in arms being too mighty even for their trained legions. Yet it was bad enough so, and the time could not be far off when Portsmouth would be isolated and the real business of the invaders begun. Twice had a landing been attempted on the East Coast and twice had the invaders been driven into the sea or shot down to a man. Thrice had violent attacks been pressed towards the Metropolis —, at the second our lines recoiled and a cold fear cramped the hearts of all in London ; but at the third attempt the men of England stood firm and the Germans dashed frantically but ineffectually against the immovable lines of stolid Britons.

On the sea things had changed in ten weeks. One day it was reported that ten German first-class battleships lay at Portland and simultaneously eight more were seen cruising off Plymouth ; this could only be explained by the addition of the Russian ships to the remaining German vessels.

Yet far more important from the British point of view was a long article in the well-known service journal, the "Naval and Military Record," giving an account of the work at Portsmouth Dockyard.

"The repairs to the damaged ships continue to receive "the whole attention of the Dockyard authorities and "overtime is being worked in every department. The "Dreadnought" was floated out of No. 15 Dock on July "10th. and still lies alongside the wharf receiving finish-

"ing touches. Her repairs took far longer than was anticipated by the press, and references to 'fit for service in a fortnight' were obviously ridiculous, too ridiculous to anyone who has made a study of war-ship construction. For all that, the authorities have displayed a commendable activity and are to be complimented upon the amount of work they have got through. They have been ably backed up in their endeavours not only by the labourers themselves but by the complements of the ships who are voluntarily turning their hands to skilled-labour work with the desire to expedite matters and get to sea again. The armoured cruisers 'Shannon,' 'Duke of Edinburgh' and 'Natal' are in the fitting out basin, their places in dock being taken by the 'Lord Nelson,' battleship, 'Kashima,' Japanese battleship and the 'Defence,' armoured cruiser. The first of these is to be undocked to-day, the 'Kashima' on Tuesday or Wednesday next and the 'Defence' a week later. Besides these, the 'Mars,' 'Prince George,' 'Swiftsure' and 'Triumph,' battleships, 'Drake,' 'Roxburg' and 'Aso,' armoured cruisers, are ready for sea and are moored in the stream. The 'Agamemnon,' 'Britannia,' 'Commonwealth' and 'Albemarle' have been raised and are awaiting their turn for docking, whilst many more will shortly be afloat again and, by the beginning of November, we may hope to see at least twelve first class battleships ready for service and probably quite as many armoured cruisers. The nightly destroyer attacks against Portland have been discontinued, the vigilance of the enemy making them merely hazardous without any likelihood of their proving successful. The defences in the Isle of Wight are being considerably strengthened with a view to resisting any attempts at

" landing. Yesterday the coast-guards on Culver Cliff
" observed two new armoured cruisers flying the Russian
" flag ; these are probably the ' Bayan ' and ' Admiral
" Makaroff,' built on the model of the ' Aso ' to replace
" ships lost during the Russo-Japanese war. As I write
" news reaches me that the ' New Zealand ' has been
" raised and that the ' Dominion ' will be afloat on
" Monday. With these two additional ships in fighting
" trim our prospects for the future are by no means
" hopeless."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Seige of Portsmouth.

We may be excused for devoting some considerable space to the most important feature of this war,—the great seige of Portsmouth. This siege was as remarkable for the savagery of the attacks as for the stubbornness of the defence and also for the amazing disparity in numbers between the opposing forces. The Germans had landed, we now know, a total of 1,460,000 men, or more than seven times as many as General Nogi had at his command before Port Arthur. On the other hand, at least 500,000 of this number were employed guarding the rear of the invading force and in holding in check the continuous attacks that the islanders delivered upon every side. Even so they could oppose nearly one million trained men to less than 180,000 Britishers and of these many were soldiers of the moment—and fine fighters they made too. It was soon abundantly evident that the enemy intended employing much the same strategy and tactics as the Japanese had contemplated at Port Arthur, namely, to carry the place by storm, breaking down the defence by sheer weight of numbers. The story of the seige is indeed so full of tragic interest, that its narration is rather in the nature of a romance than an account of what actually occurred. Never in the history of warfare have there been encounters so indescribably bloody, so savage in purpose, so savage in execution. Naturally the casualties were enormous and on the part of the Germans totalled over seven hundred thousand^d, of which nearly half a million were killed

outright. The garrison lost nearly one half its force but its power of resistance seemed at no time to have been in any way diminished by the reduction.

The German plans had been marred by the unexpected resistance offered their advance and hence it was not until Thursday, September 2nd, that all communication with the outer world was finally severed.

Affairs were still dictated from London by means of wireless telegraphy with machines "tuned" in such a manner that the Germans found it impossible to confuse messages by mixing currents. But at last they reached the outer line of forts and were flung headlong at the defences by their commanding officers. The result of this first attempt came as a shock to the Teuton General Staff, for they were repulsed all along the line and the ended in a tragedy magnified a thousand times by the extraordinary courage and determination of the assaulters,—a tragedy indeed for which no excuse could be found even by the reason that the capture of Portsmouth was essential and that the sacrifice of life was to accomplish this end without resorting to scientific siege operations.

The British defence against this primary assault was more than masterly in conception and ghastly effective in its execution. The German coup had been arranged to take place shortly after mid-night in a general assault which was, however, anticipated by the ever alert garrison and rendered neutral by a pre-arranged counter-attack. The use of shells, which on bursting threw out chains of luminous stars, powerful searchlights and parachute rockets used in conjunction with twelve and three pounder quickfirers, Pom-poms and light machine guns, wrought awful havoc in the serried ranks of the brave assaulters. At this attempt there fell at a modest

computation eleven thousand Germans, and in the attack dynamite hand-grenades were used for the first time with horrible effectiveness.

But sanguinary as this encounter had been, it was nothing as compared to the three days' assault on the Bow-Hill Forts. Bow Hill is a crescent shaped eminence with its outer curve facing due east, and though of immense strength, it represented the key to the inner line of defence east of the city, forming as it did the junction between the outer and inner lines. Once in German hands, the fortifications on Chalton and Compton Downs and other adjacent hills, would be wholly untenable and the collapse of the defence would of a certainty follow. Hence the decision of the enemy to make one grand effort to capture this ridge. The defence, from the northern corner to Walderton Down rested in nine forts. Farthest north was Down Place Fort and East Beacon Hill Battery armed with well protected six-inch guns, and, in the former, two of 9.2in. bore, they were situated at a height of between 750 and 800 feet and commanded a wide stretch of country to the north and east. The western flank was covered by Fort Harting and moreover the valley between this fort and Down Place was rendered more inhospitable than even nature had made it by land mines, stake-pits and wire obstruction. Thence, turning south, the elevation rapidly decreased, so that Hill-lands Battery was no more than 480 feet high and was commanded by a hill occupied by the enemy three miles away and 820 feet high, (Linch Down). Then came Bow Hill ranging from 50 to 630 feet in height and here were Forts East Marden, Goose-hill and Bow Hill, all well protected and heavily armed. Ashdean Fort, (400 feet) was the last and lowest of the series. Inside the crescent of Bow

Hill lay two more forts, Inholmes Copse Fort (400 feet) supporting Goose Hill Fort and West Marden Fort (510 feet) covering the ground behind Hill-land Battery. And it was against these that the Germans were ruthlessly hurled regiment after regiment, and as ruthlessly repulsed and slaughtered.

An officer who was in one of the trenches behind Hill-lands Battery supplies the following vivid account of that awful three days.

"We had never ceased perfecting our defence and morning and night did our best to render the various positions impregnable. My special care was a long earth-work extending over a mile across the Down joining Hill-lands Battery to East Beacon Hill. We had thrown up earthworks to a height of eight feet and had constructed strong pillared bomb-proof shelters behind it, and here my men had made themselves very snug indeed. At either end of this entrenchment was a small block-house faced with thin steel plates, each containing a single Maxim and a searchlight. We had a number of these latter just about here since it was of the utmost importance that the position be held. Besides the above machine guns we had a couple placed mid-way between the block-houses. From the summit of the earthworks we had a clear view down hill and could annihilate any force of men advancing up the slope. Nevertheless the whole front had been pitched with two-foot wooden stakes, with barbed wire netted and re-netted across them and firmly fixed with staples. Then, too, we had dug five rows of pits and placed wooden stakes at the bottom facing point upwards,—deuced nasty obstructions to fall into; these, in addition to mines, made the approach about as ticklish as one could well wish.

"The whole space was of course covered by the

flanking forts, and, in addition to these, a terrific fire could be poured in from West Marden over our heads. The Germans had mounted a brace of heavy seige guns on Linch Down and dropped shell after shell into our lines which though they did but slight damage, caused us no little annoyance and kept us constantly busy repairing our wall. But though we were subjected to continuous attacks and frequent violent assaults, none equalled in severity and determination that extending from Sunday, September 19th to the morning of Thursday when the enemy was finally driven back. The capture of Linch Down and the adjacent hills had enabled the investing army to commence closing in its line of containment about the permanent forts upon the northern extremity of the eastern fortridge. Every inch now gained was contested with the greatest spirit, for to allow our lines to be broken meant instant capture of the entire fortress.

"We knew instinctively that a massed assault would be hurled against our position and to meet any such assault my men had been doubled and an additional Maxim and a larger quantity of ammunition sent up to us. On Saturday night an offensive movement was rapidly developed on the west fortridge from Bishops Waltham, several large howitzers mounted upon high land behind the town have poured in a heavy fire for many hours upon Mayhill Battery and Midlington Fort. General Baden Powell was not however deceived by this obvious feint but sent a reminder around the lines to keep our guards endlessly on the alert and to telephone immediately danger threatened.

"At 10.30 p.m. on Sunday evening a furious fire was opened in our direction from the enemy's lines and a rain of projectiles fell about us on every side. For the

first time the Germans were using 10.8 in. howitzers, weapons similar to those employed by the Japanese before Port Arthur. One of my block-houses was twice pierced through and through and but for the commander's (Lieut. Birking) forethought in placing the ammunition in a bomb-proof cave, a terrible explosion would have resulted.

"For two hours the firing continued and the enemy must have discharged many thousand tons of projectiles, at us, but the result was not as dreadful as they probably anticipated. Then came the expected assault. I was sitting upon an elevated 'look-out' protected by a 4.7 in. gun shield and peering through the darkness to see if I could make out anything.

"Suddenly the guns stopped simultaneously, and above the resultant stillness rose the blare of a brass band playing "Die Wacht am Rhine." Louder it sounded and louder, then again died down as the soft wind wafted the strains towards us or away from us.

"They were being led to the attack by the bands!

"A faint crackling could be heard far below us and an occasional muffled command. I had already directed a junior to telephone to head quarters and had the satisfaction of knowing that five thousand additional men were being hurried up in support.

"I shall never forget that waiting. Ten minutes perhaps in all, yet to me it seemed an age. The signs of an approaching force became more frequent and more distinguishable.

"Then came a muttered imprecation, deep and guttural, an audible tripping and next a wild, unearthly shriek.

"The first of the foe had reached the staked pits!

"Of a sudden a clear white shaft of light cut the air,

painfully searing the eyes by its contrast to the surrounding night. Hill-lands Battery had opened the game and the assault had begun in all earnestness. Two lights glared from my block-houses, a fourth shot dazzling from West Marden and yet another flooded the northern ridge from East Beacon Hill.

"And what a sight they disclosed!

"There, less than eight hundred yards away, was advancing a dense mass of uniformed men—at the double. On they came and bravely slashed at the wire, and cast wide boards (brought with them) across the deadly pits.

"But we were now to take a part in the business. Twenty bugles rang out clearly and an inferno of fire swept in deadly unison into the struggling foe.

"Heavens! Shall I ever forget that sight. In the full glare of a light surpassing that of day, we could not miss the seething waves of humanity and though thousands died in the first few moments, their very closeness would not let them fall. To go back they had been forbidden—to come forward they found impossible. They could but die and bravely did they meet their fate. The German General Staff had anticipated a loss of ten thousand killed and as many wounded; the price would have been none too much for the prize gained had the movement been successful.

"They hacked and tore, slashed and pulled at the deadly restraining strands and ever the leaden hail fell on them, withering them, cutting them, smashing them, mutilating them. Their own guns spat vengeance at us but with little effect beyond the extinguishing of one searchlight. At last the foremost pits were all full, aye! and over full a dozen times with blood-streaming corpses. Our own guns turned on an increased volume of shrapnel

and the enemy's line was almost completely hidden in smoke. But in spite even of this hellish fire, they made a certain advance and little by little the wire-entanglements were being destroyed. Then came the most awful feature of that dreadful night. A vast upheaval shook the ground and the whole slope upon which the attackers were massed seemed to rise bodily into the air.

"A gigantic land-mine had been exploded from Hill-lands Battery!

"Up and up went the earth, smoke and flames mingling with the men that had formerly stood there. Our own men dropped in a second behind their bomb-proofs, but I remained, safe in the shelter of my shield. Shrieks and yells rose above the general turmoil, and in the searching beams of the lights I could see a gruesome mixture of human remains falling, far-flung, upon the neighbouring hills. God! to have been spectator of that awful sight! Never can it fade from my memory, never be blotted from the mind. Arms, legs, heads smacked loudly on the shot-pitted slopes, for nothing whole was found, nothing intact, only parts—just parts. It is reckoned that at that one explosion seven thousand men were hurled into eternity.

"But it was enough. As suddenly as it had begun so suddenly did the attack cease and with wild cries of terror, the German troops fled headlong back towards their covering trenches. Their iron nerves had been broken, their dogged courage crushed by the terrible ordeal through which they had been forced to pass.

"As day broke we could see the slaughter for which we were responsible. Piled high against the wire-joined stakes lay Teuton uniforms, their ghastly bearers seamed and torn by the fierce fire of the preceding night.

"All through that day their giant howitzers coughed

five hundred pound projectiles into our lines, and all that day our own great weapons roared out an answering challenge. Salvo on salvo, the never ceasing crash tormented the hearing and wore the listener to distraction. Then, too, there were the dead to remove from our own lines, and eight hundred poor fellows had fallen victims to the assaulter's fire. Another thousand lay wounded and these were taken first to Rowlands Castle and thence by rail to Portsmouth, where the kindly women, who had formed a Red Cross Guild, gave them every attention.

"In the evening, further reserves were brought up to us and the supply of ammunition doubled, whilst a further three machine guns had been added to my position. And this night hand-grenades were served out in large quantities, for we knew that another assault as determined as the first must bring the enemy well up to our earthworks.

"During the day German troops had been seen, from a balloon look-out, pouring into the concentration trenches before Linch Down and it was estimated that the assault was to be made with at least sixty thousand men. Shortly before dark, two-thirds of these had massed in the long parallel in the valley at the foot of the hill, the remainder being held in reserve.

"The attack was commenced at 10.30 p.m. by the whole of the assaulting divisions advancing towards our line of earthworks under a terrible fire from our forts the effect of which was however somewhat neutralized by a terrific bombardment from the Germans. There was, as might have been expected, a long delay at the line of wire-entanglements and pits, but, in spite of a galling and deadly fire, they at last crossed beyond the obstructions by three or four gaps and in the full glare

of the searchlights, formed up into groups of fifteen men or thereabouts. It did not seem possible that the intention was to advance up the rugged, shell-torn slopes in this close formation, yet this thing they did—the black mass of men almost at once moving up towards the first line of trenches. They had not gone far before they were smitten by a murderous cross rifle fire and the men went down, literally, in scores.

"Then occurred a scene such as words can never hope to describe. For the officers, their naked swords flashing in the white rays of concentrated light, called a halt and, having been given the words of command as clearly and methodically as though upon parade, the massed columns, still keeping ranks, poured a dozen volleys into the earthworks above them.

"It was magnificent—but nothing more.

"The poor doomed marksmen could not have hit anything had they tried their hardest, for we above them were at an angle almost impossible to attain by men firing standing from ranks. So after the futility of their action had been realised, the advance again began under a terribly effective fire, until about five thousand of them reached a dead angle just under the upper trench line, where there was partial cover. Another thousand rushed forward from the still advancing mass and yet another thousand—and of each lot perhaps four hundred made the shelter of the little hill. For half an hour they made similar rushes until at least eight thousand were collected in comparative security not four hundred yards from our earthworks.

"Then came the final charge; if you have seen the ants swarming forth at the disturbance of their nest, you can form some idea of the sight that met our eyes as these thousands of Germans, cheering and yelling,

tore headlong up the last few yards of the slope. What could Maxims or rifles avail now? They fell in their hundreds, of course, but by sheer weight of numbers they still came on, higher and ever higher, until from our eight foot works we could distinguish the features of the charging foe.

"Grenades!"

"A great voice rang out down the line and in a moment more the vicious bombs were landing amongst the assaulters and exploding with devastating effect. It only lasted eight minutes, perhaps less—but each of our men had had a score of the deadly missiles piled at his side and they had worked well in placing them. In the close formation the enemy had adopted, half a dozen men at a time were torn limb from limb, but more horrible was it when the grenades burst on the ground and blew off a dozen feet, doing little damage to the remainder. There must have been five hundred subsequently found with their power of walking destroyed either at the ankle or the knee. Even so the officers urged the men forward and at one place close to me they reached the wall and a young, clean shaven lieutenant leapt nimbly to the top and was being followed by half a dozen of his men.

"He seemed to lead a charmed life and I, fearing his bravery might lead to dire consequences for us (and having, indeed, twice missed him with my revolver) seized a grenade and flung it hard at him.

"Heavens! it struck him in the mouth fairly!

"A fierce explosion followed and his whole countenance was entirely blotted out by a dazzling white light: a zizzling hiss rose above the roar and in a moment his blood-spouting beheaded trunk fell twisting at my feet.

"His head had been blown completely away!!

" His comrades fell back—two of them dead, and I climbed the ridge to see how matters progressed elsewhere. It was only as might have been expected, for the shattered remnant had broken and gone down hill in a mad head-long flight, taking with them in panic practically the whole attacking column. But at the trenches where the reserves awaited them, formed up with fixed bayonets, ready for the order to advance, a sudden shame seemed to sweep over them. They stopped, turned about and waited—somewhat as lost sheep upon a fog-bound hill.

" They appeared dazed and idiotic—driven thoughtless by sheer horror; some shouldered their rifles and trudged manfully up hill again, others flung down their arms, and stood listless, unable to act for themselves. No attempt was made at formation and the sight was pathetic to the last degree. And the fire from our lines went on unceasingly whilst these poor men?—and we all pitied them—walked aimlessly about knowing not what to do.

" It was at this time that I, through perhaps lack of caution, received a bullet through the left shoulder, and the rest of my narrative is from what I heard and not what I myself saw. That night the casualties of our foe amounted to eighteen thousand killed and wounded, and it was on Tuesday morning that a 380 pound shell entered one of their magazines on Colworth Down, the explosion involving the deaths of seven hundred men who were quartered there. Tuesday was another day of continuous bombardment more furious even than on the preceding days, and it will be remembered also for the attack on Thorney Island under cover of a sea-fog, an attack that cost us three hundred and the Germans, who had advanced across flat ground, twelve hundred men.

Luckily for us the fog had lifted just in the nick of time and thenceforth elaborate precautions were taken against the recurrence of such an attack.

"Wednesday night, the last of the most murderous three nights in the history of warfare, the Germans tried another method. They made a feint against the East Beacon Hill to lead us to anticipate a third attack similar to the other two, but sent their main forces against Bow Hill and Ashdean Forts. In this attack fish-torpedoes were used for the first time and very efficient they proved, whole columns being mown down by the vast explosions they created. No. 13 Block House fired a wide-spread land mine and hurled a regiment and a half high into the air and in the end, at 3.40 on Thursday morning, the attack failed and it was some weeks before they dared make a similar attempt.

"Altogether in those three days the casualties to the Germans are calculated to have reached, in killed and wounded, the enormous total of seventy-three thousand men, of whom over two-thirds were killed outright. We on our side had suffered heavily, but in comparison the totals were ridiculously small, the killed amounting to two thousand one hundred and forty odd, and the wounded about one thousand five hundred—an altogether disproportionate amount."

CHAPTER XIX.

The Kaiser's Decision.

The Kaiser sat in his study at Potsdam and somewhat moodily scanned the reports from his Generals at the front. He was pale and thin and had obviously not fully recovered from his serious illness, during which, (without his direct consent,) his country had been rushed into a fearful war. Von Bülow, clever man that he had always been, had pulled the strings entirely regardless of his Imperial master,—then convalescent at a villa near Spa in Belgium. He had usurped every authority, made truth subservient to his desires and finally so influenced the Kaiser that on his recovery he, the Kaiser, had perforce to support every action of his Chancellor and throw himself whole-heartedly into the prosecution of a campaign entirely hateful to him. Naturally, since matters were beyond repair, he could not for his honour's sake be laggard in enthusiasm. The die was cast and he had burnt his boats,—or had had them burnt for him. Yet he was very apprehensive ; it was no good blinking facts,—things were not going as well as they might and, indeed, if some victory were not very soon reported it was quite evident to him that the seething discontent in his vast dominion would degenerate into open hostilities of a revolutionary character. True, in weighing the pros and cons of the case, there was no immediate cause for alarm. The recent deal in warships with his ally the Czar had added considerably to his fleet, and he saw no reason why in the near future the dark cloud of dismal failure should not be dissipated by the fair breeze of triumphant success.

A great marble clock surmounted the mantel piece and glancing up he noted that but two minutes remained before eleven, for which hour a meeting of the Imperial Secretaries had been summoned. A step without announced the first arrival, his Chancellor, Prince Von Bülow, and together the two men strolled towards the Council Chamber. Presently the ministers arrived, all well to time and to the number of fourteen. Taking his seat at the head of the long polished table, the King of Germany commenced the catechism of questions which formed the usual order of procedure at these meetings. After a short address in which he set out his views on the situation, he turned to his Chancellor and asked him what opinion he held.

"Sire, I would not dare to differ from your Majesty in the opinion you have so ably expressed, but I venture to hope that the views your Majesty holds are somewhat pessimistic when all the circumstances are fully considered. Let me enumerate them.

"We have an undisputed command of the sea, an army exceeding in efficiency any in the wide world, a surplus of money sufficient for many months to come, a peaceful relationship with every other power excepting only Japan and, lastly, your Imperial Majesty at the head of affairs as the master mind. More we could not wish. Reverses we have suffered of course, and I may even say that the stubborn resistance of the English has come somewhat as a surprise to us. But that we shall overcome that resistance and, once and for all, crush the race under whose arrogance and assertiveness we have so long been forced to exist, is an absolute certainty to question which would be a folly. It is unfortunate that our naval reserves are not greater but Herr Admiral von Tirpitz has prepared for me a list of the two navies as they stand

at present, and this list I have the honour to hand your Majesty."

So saying he passed a neatly written foolscap sheet to the King who glanced carefully through it. As it is of great interest, I have reproduced part of it here, and from it may be seen the naval position as it existed on September 24th. It will be noticed that it gives the names of battleships and armoured cruisers with, of the former, the tonnages in metric tons.

NAVAL POSITION ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24th, 19—

ENGLAND

DEUTSCHLAND

Battleships 1st Class.

1 Royal Sovereign	14,850 tons	1 Petropaulovsk (new)	19,800 tons
2 Empress of India	14,950 tons	2 Retvisan (new)	19,800 tons
3 Nile	—	3 Imp. Pavel I.	17,400 tons
4 Queen	—	4 Andreie Pervosvanni	17,400 tons
5 Formidable	—	5 Slava	18,516 tons
6 Venerable	—	6 Czarevitch	18,180 tons
7 Glory	—	7 Hannover	18,200 tons
8 Goliath	—	8 Hessen	18,200 tons
		9 Preussen	18,200 tons
		10 Elsass	18,200 tons
		11 Braunschweig	18,200 tons
		12 Zähringen	11,890 tons
		13 Schwaben	11,890 tons
		14 Wittelsbach	11,890 tons
		15 K. Barbarossa	11,150 tons
		16 K. Wilhelm der Grosse	11,150 tons
		17 K. Friedrich III.	11,150 tons
		18 Wörth	10,060 tons
		19 Weissenburg	10,060 tons

Battleships 2nd Class

NIL

1 Baden	7,870 tons
2 Württemberg	7,870 tons
3 Bayern	7,870 tons
4 Sachsen	7,870 tons

Armoured Cruisers

- 1 Leviathan
- 2 King Alfred

- 1 Gromoboi
- 2 Rossia

ENGLAND	DEUTSCHLAND
3 Aboukir	3 Rurik (new)
4 Hogue	4 Bayan "
5 Bacchante	5 Ad. Makaroff (new)
6 Monmouth	6 Pallada (new)
7 Lancaster	7 Scharnhorst
8 Suffolk	8 Yorck
	9 Friedrich Karl
	10 Prince Heinrich

This concluded the armoured ships of the first and second classes, but further lists were given of coast-defence ships, of which Germany had six and we none, protected cruisers, scouts, destroyers and other torpedo craft. It pointed out that "in the above list, the first three British battleships are alone intact, and all of these are old; the remaining five were much damaged by our fleet in the recent action. The first six battleships and the first six armoured cruisers in our column are the vessels we purchased from Russia. These are all now in commission and at sea. We have no knowledge of the progress made in raising the sunken ships at Portsmouth but do not anticipate more than three or four being efficiently repaired this year."

The Kaiser handed it back to his Chancellor.

"That certainly makes me happier, Bülow, for our preponderance seems overwhelming.

"It is even greater than it seems, sire, since three of the enemy are shut up in the Thames and the remainder are at Devonport. Any force attempting to leave either of these places, or Portsmouth, would be at once attacked and annihilated by our entire Navy, which can deal with any squadron separately with the greatest ease. As to the Japanese, they have but ten first-class battleships to send against us, and we are fully capable of dealing with them and the British forces as well.

"Very good. We have, I believe, nearly one and a half million men in the field; that leaves us with a similar number who have undergone military training in Germany.

"That is so, Sire."

"Is that number sufficient to command law and order within the Empire if their Emperor leaves for the front," asked the Kaiser, his chest swelling with self satisfaction as he burst his intention upon his astonished ministers like a bomb-shell.

"But, Sire——" they all began protesting.

"No, no, gentlemen, there must be no "buts" please. I have decided this matter myself and am not to be turned from any course whatsoever when once I have made up my mind thereon. I leave for England tomorrow in the 'Elsass' with my eldest son."

Having delivered himself of this, His Majesty waved a dismissal and presently he was left alone with his Chancellor. When finally the door had closed, the Emperor William put his arm through that of Prince von Bülow in a friendly manner and asked earnestly:

"Tell me honestly, Bülow, whether you are not a little nervous at our continuous lack of success at Portsmouth?"

"Your Majesty, as man to man the situation increases in gravity day by day, and I applaud your decision to go yourself to the front. Your presence there may turn the tide of disaster,—for no other word befits the constant terrible repulses to which our troops are subjected."

A knocking at the door here made both of them look up. "Herein," said the King, and an orderly stepped forward with a message for the Prince. He tore it open and bit his lips as he read it.

"Well, Bülow, what is it? Don't be frightened to tell me."

The Chancellor handed him the paper,—a telegram.

"Regret report Battleship "Imperator Pavel I." torpedoed off Bournemouth by British Submarine. Sank in eight minutes. Four hundred of crew saved."

"Donnerwetter! these English take a lot of beating," cried the chagrined Kaiser, stamping on the floor.

They did, indeed.

CHAPTER XX.

How Submarine B6 went for a Cruise

It will be remembered that amongst those taking part in the destruction of the German torpedo-craft subsequent to their raid on Spithead, were Lieutenant Nelson and Sub-Lieutenant FitzHerbert of H.M. seagoing destroyer "Afridi." Now it chanced that the "Afridi" had been selected to lead an attack on the German fleet at Portland during the early days of September. The enemy had however been fully wide awake and the attack failed as had many before it. But such an attack made by Englishmen, fails for only one reason—that the attacking ships have all been either sunk or badly disabled.

So, when one morning, the "Afridi" crept alone into Portsmouth battered and torn, and bearing very little resemblance to her former self, it was conjectured that none of her five companions had escaped. The conjecture was perfectly correct and but that a lucky fog had hidden the "Afridi" as she drifted helpless past the zone of fire she would herself have been sent to the bottom. Her crew of nearly a hundred had been sadly reduced and Lieutenant Nelson made his report with his left arm in a sling, whilst his junior was carried ashore unconscious.

Thus two very useful young officers were without a berth, and when next day FitzHerbert sat up in bed with a head beating like a sledge hammer, (and you're apt to get hurt when you tumble ten feet on to a steel deck head first) but otherwise little the worse for a decidedly

nasty fall, he communed with Nelson as to the steps they should take to obtain another command. For a bullet through the arm and a bump the size of an orange on the back of the head are of no account in the service,—certainly nothing to keep a man out of harness. Up spake the Lieutenant:—

“Say, Fitz, have you ever done any submarining?”

“Submarining? Good Gad! you’re not going to try that game, old man, surely?”

“Well I just don’t know. You see Pompey’s* very slow now that we’re cut off and I can’t stick land work. Too much being hit and too little hitting back for my taste you know. And, besides, there’s little B6 sitting in the Yard fairly itching to be taken out and here am I fairly itching to take her. She’s a bit crank I know, but I did three years in ‘em as a sub., and what I don’t know I can guess. My only trouble is about you; we’ve been pretty good pals so far and I’d like to see peace in together. Didn’t you tell me you had three months in one of the A’s?”

“Not three—only two, but it was devilish tricky while it lasted. We spent most of our time bumping sand-banks, sinking barges and other weird fish or coming up sudden when we wanted to sink.”

“Nasty,—dam nasty; still that sort of game is old history now and according to rumour there’s nothing steadier than a submarine in these days. Anyhow if I get the hooker, will you join in the fun?”

“Snakes, rather. That’ll just suit little Fitz. Give us another twenty-four hours to reduce this beastly bumplet and I’m your man.”

“No such hurry, Fitz, as all that. My arm’s a bit dicky pro tem., as the docs. say, and saw-bones the first

* In the service Portsmouth is known as “Pompey.”

says 'at least a fortnight' which spells a week, I expect. Besides the B6 wants overhauling and from all I hear it means ten days 'hammer and wrench' with a little skilful commandeering thrown in. Thanks for your answer, old chap, it wouldn't have been the same without you. So long."

Ten days later the two young officers stood on the narrow deck of a low free-board fish-shaped craft, an ugly hellish affair, frightfully deadly to look at and frightfully deadly if efficiently employed. Commander Nelson and Lieutenant FitzHerbert (promotion went quickly in those days and the gallant pair had done good work) were superintending the final touches to the B6 submarine. There was a dearth of officers fully up in this special branch of naval work and when Nelson had offered to take out the submarine and do what he could to confound Britain's enemies the Admiral had been delighted and gladly had he accepted the offer. Nelson had selected his crew with the greatest care and for a few days made excursions into the Solent and Spithead to accustom them thoroughly to the eccentricities of their ship,—for every submarine acts differently and, like a high-spirited horse, must be humoured and gently dealt with. Torpedo practice they had, too, and each fish-like projectile was run until its errors one way or another were fully known. At last the day arrived when Commander Nelson considered that proficiency in every man had reached a point of excellence that a year's practice would not surpass. Moreover his arm was well again of the bullet wound, a small pucker alone remaining; and FitzHerbert's cap sat on his head without wobbling, for which he was very thankful.

"Fitz," began Nelson one dull Thursday afternoon,—September 23rd, to be exact—"are you on for a beano to-night?"

"Me?" queried FitzHerbert somewhat ungrammatically, "what sort of beano?"

"Oh, just a mouch round Portland to see if we can bag a German sausage as a surprise for King William the 'Sneakond.'"

"Righto," came the willing answer; "I 'spose that means turning in now and getting to-night's snooze over as quick as possible. Better warn the giddy crew."

"All done, me lad, ten minutes ago. They are free until two bells in the 'first dog,' then its up and away, and a bit of grouse shooting with battleships for birds."

"Cheers, says I; but why this sudden resolve?"

"Papa Groome," (for so they irreverently termed the admiral), "told me this morning that six jolly great Rooshans had joined the Dutchmen, and that the whole bunch are keeping company. So I proposed slipping down that way, laying about for a bit, and then firing a torpedo into the brown as they left the break-water. Risky, of course, but still well worth a shoot. Up jumps Papa and starts wringing my hand for a brave fellow,—not bad that, what? So out I come and behold here am I, Commander Nelson, R.N., more pleased than a school boy going home for his holidays; but, I say, Fitz, war does buck one up no end. I can't keep serious two minutes together these days. Well, I'm off to bye-bye. 'Bong-swar' until two bells."

At 5.30 p.m. "B6" "oiled" slowly down the harbour, past the repaired warships, past the grand old "Victory," past the stout log-and-spike boom—then away west towards Hurst Castle and out into the open seas off the bristling Needles. A nasty swell was working in from the south and the submarine laboured considerably between the successive waves, making it anything but pleasant for her occupants. She slogged lumping into

the green swirls and smacked soundly as she bore through and fell lunging into the hollow trough on the further side. She swung, too, like a pendulum, the motion seeming to hang round her high conning tower. Up she came again out of the sousing brine and drove, bluntly, deep into the next curler. Swish, she is past and flies down a liquid hill in a smother of spray from nose to whirling propeller. Bash, bang, once more through a mountain of moving sea, splashing, kicking, groaning and jibbing,—a nasty, cross corkscrew motion setting teeth on edge and keeping the nerves at a high tension.

Once clear of the Needles "Race," things calmed down a bit; the waves were there still, but they were good honest regular waves making no more trouble than their size demanded. Occasionally something extra bumped the submarine soundly, setting her end up almost and seating her occupants hard upon the steelen floor.

"Hell," came a muttered imprecation immediately after a loud smack as a certain human part sat where it was never intended.

"Steady, Smithson—not too much language, please," adjured FitzHerbert, who was himself silently cursing and rubbing a bruised shin bone.

"Beg pardin, sir, but I couldernt 'elp it. I aint used ter settin on sharp nut 'eads and I don't take too kindly to noo 'abits."

"Submarinein' aint 'arf beer an' skittels mate, didn' I warn yer?" said another sailor, for discipline must of necessity be lax where comfort is so little known.

"You al'ays was a grumbler, Jack, you was. Wot you wants is a bloomin' drorin' room you do, and no errer."

"Rot yer silly talk ; you're too funny, mate, you are. You jest waits until yer——"

"Hold yer tongues, you two men," cried Nelson, who would not allow any bickering. And for a space it went on well as before, the jolting lessening somewhat as they bore west. At 7.30 the motion had become so much calmer, that Nelson lifted the hatch and conned the vessel from the deck. The wind had dropped and the sea, close in as they were to land, was smooth but for the long gurgling swells that took her across the beam. So for an hour they ran on at about fourteen knots, and then of a sudden the young officer spied a black smudge appearing over the horizon, dead ahead. Two minutes' observation was sufficient to assure him it was a big ship coming towards them.

"Ease her to five," he yelled down the tube, and the regular beat of the great petrol engines fell gradually in intensity, her bow-wave subsided and presently the "B6" was barely rippling the surface with her lumbering passage.

A good ten minutes he held on thus, and by that time six other clouds of dirty smoke had joined the first. Nelson had the engines stopped and "trimmed ship" for diving. As the conning tower sank lower and lower beneath the surface a thrill of wild expectancy overawed all within the curious craft. This was a novel experience for them ; up till then little had been heard of submarines and they had fallen into great disfavour. Now an opportunity presented itself to redeem that reputation upon which the slur of inefficiency had so unjustly been cast.

FitzHerbert looked askance at his senior and asked him in a husky voice,—husky he knew not why,

"What's your idea for attack, skip?"

Nelson seemed wonderfully calm and collected, and for a moment did not reply. Then he said:

"It's like this. If we trust to that tube"—nodding towards the optical periscopic apparatus—"we shall probably miss our ship. If we are close enough and are on the surface, it's a million pounds to a hayseed we hit her. But, on the other hand, in the latter event it's ten to one they will hit us. Personally I'd run the risk,—how would the men take it?"

The men had been listening with strained ears and for a few moments whispered together. Then came up a burly fellow and put the opinion of his mates and himself to his officers in a few concise words.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but if so be we can sink a Rooshan, we, meanin' me and them there," with a jerk of an oily thumb over his shoulder, "don't want you for to think of us in the matter, we ain't chickens, and anythink you does will be what we likes."

"God bless you for that, Robson,—and thank you, men, all. I propose lying right in their path with the conning tower a few feet above the surface, and just sufficient weigh on for steering purposes. In this dusk they probably won't see us, for I much doubt if they anticipate danger,—and that means a slack watch in foreign vessels. At the right time I shall call for all speed and we'll go bald-headed at them,—I conning her from the deck. At five hundred yards and if possible nearer, I shall let fly at the most convenient enemy, drop inside, close down, sink to sixty feet and steer directly south out to sea if the way is clear. If I'm hit, Lieut. FitzHerbert will take command and endeavour to carry out the same plan, and if he falls too, you Robson are to carry on and make your way back to Portsmouth and report immediately. Is that clear?"

"Aye, aye, sir," came the chorus.

"Now, get ready, and await the word, since they are closing us fast."

The seconds dragged on leaden wings,—interminable were the few moments before the crucial moment arrived. At last it came. Nelson caught his breath, gave one glance at the manometer and then shouted:

"Up with her and switch the current on."

A loud crackling came from the stern and a strong smell of ozone filled the interior. Almost at once the submarine, driven with maximum power, felt the lift of the rudders; taking a steep slant, she slid out into the open. In a trice the hatch was flung back and Nelson stepped quickly outside, shutting the hatch behind him.

He had risen in the very midst of a fleet of fourteen ships,—one great vessel ploughing by not forty yards from his starboard quarter. He heard bugles and rattling chains, hoarse shouts and excited orders,—but heeded none of them.

His eyes were fixed on one thing,—a great funnelled Leviathan towering high above the others in its immensity. Huge guns had she, pointing in every direction but despite this, on seeing her little foe she yawed to port and tore blindly across the submarine's bows. A twist of the wheel and "B6" swung to starboard thus bringing the giant battleship directly ahead and at no greater distance than three hundred yards.

"Fire!" he yelled. "Fire!! in Heaven's name, Fire!!!" and rattled the telephone in a frenzy. But he had no need to fear; at his first word, a dull cough shook the fabric beneath him. "B6" gave a momentary upward kick,—and a torpedo was speeding at thirty-five knots towards the enemy.

All this happened in a few seconds only, perhaps

forty. Then came a gruff report from the foe, followed almost immediately by the rattling spit of machine-gun fire.

Nelson felt something seize him violently, bear him twirling aloft into a world of hazy visions teeming with golden palaces and winged angels; then again he saw the stricken battleship, but painted in iridescent colours and floating unsteadily on a deep crimson cloud; he lost knowledge of time and place and, looking down, saw naught of the body that had once been his. Yet a persistent drum twanged loudly somewhere and thumped maddeningly at his shattered thoughts. A familiar voice came through these misty, disconnected ramblings, urging him to hold on just one second, then more words, words, words.—“Well done, old man,” it shouted, and “Steady, Robson, he’s hit badly,” again a weird conglomeration of words and visions; lastly a sudden clearing and he saw it all.

The submarine was wallowing idly on the dark oily sea and he lay stretched upon its confined deck, supported by FitzHerbert and Robson, who were preparing to lift him up the iron grid steps and carry him below. She had drifted from the immediate scene of action but about half a mile away he saw a huge ship, obviously in a sinking condition and surrounded by a crowd of boats and launches. As he looked and breathed he felt hot gushes of blood rising in his throat and struggled for breath manfully. One more look at his work,—an inferno of steam hid all,—the ship had sunk! Again his head swam and he fell back supremely happy and as he lapsed into unconsciousness he cried with failing voice, “I have done it, my God! I have done it.”

CHAPTER XXI.

The Peril of England.

"S.M.S. Hannover.

"Portland,

"September 25th, 190—.

"Mein Lieber Otto,

"At last I have time to send you a letter about our doings. We are not quite so cheerful with the way events are marching as we should like and our recent loss of the 'Imperator Pavel I.' came as a most unpleasant surprise to us. Indeed, for my part, it is an experience I shall remember for the rest of my mortal life and how I escaped at all still remains for me a complete mystery. You will see I am in the 'Hannover' and rather cramped I find her after my poor last ship.

"But to the story, for doubtless you would like to have it from an eye-witness. As you must have heard, we have converted Portland into our chief naval base and very admirably it answers our purpose. It has been our custom to send out squadrons of ships to patrol the coast from Portland, and as for some months no attempts upon us have been made by the enemy we became, I regret to say, rather daring and indeed considered our work almost superfluous from the utilitarian point of view. Still, you must not think we were in any way lax—we love our old Father-land too much for that. It is just two days ago that the Admiral told off two divisions, composed each of four battle-ships and two armoured cruisers, with two of the small protected type attached

for out-scouting work, to patrol the coast around Portsmouth, and we set sail in company for our cruising ground. In the first division were ourselves, the new 'Retvisan,' 'Hannover' and 'Hessen,' with the 'Bayan' and 'Pallada'; we were steaming fourteen knots in two columns of line ahead disposed to port. The sea which had been nasty on starting, toned down as evening came on, and the sun set behind a perfectly level horizon,—though what that has to do with the story, goodness only knows. It was my watch and I was up on the flying-bridge above the chart house.

"We had given up keeping the men at their guns until the light altogether fails, because it had merely proved a waste of valuable energy and, often as not, they have loosed off at waves or shadows under the impression a torpedo attack was being made, and that sort of thing is scarcely good for the nerves. We had been cruising very quietly thus when one of the look-out called my attention to something about three miles ahead on the surface of the water; he thought it looked like a barrel. But on looking through my glass I could see nothing and rated him for his falsity of vision. I have no doubt now it was the conning-tower of the submarine, but as it was rapidly growing dark, and heavy clouds obscured all the light from above, it is not unnatural I regarded his being deceived as probable.

"Then came the surprise. Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when the same man gave a wild shout and pointed a few hundred yards ahead, where a huge swirl could be seen rapidly growing on the surface of the water. In less than a moment this broke into waves and out shot the entire body of an immense submarine at full speed. A yell of horror on all sides and, though it pains me to confess it, for a moment I verily believe we all lost our senses.

"I bawled the necessary orders to swing the helm hard over to ram the hellish thing if possible. But our helmsman misconstrued my order and put her wrong way about, thus presenting our broadside to the devilish foe.

"No sooner had she broken free than the lid was slung back from the conning-tower and, with the coolest possible assurance, out jumped a d----d English officer and conned his craft from the narrow deck in the sight of us all. To me on the bridge it seemed ages before either side gave a sign but at last, and it was not more than a few seconds after first sighting the enemy, a three-pounder spoke but went well wide, very nearly hitting the 'Hessen.' Immediately after came the rattle of machine guns, but I had seen the officer bend over the tube of the telephone and knew the fatal order had been given. His ship jumped spasmodically and a torpedo leapt out of the water twice in its short passage towards us. It could scarcely have found its depth before it struck, and as I felt the shock I saw the Englishman (and Gottes Himmel! his was a brave act) stumble forward and lie prone upon the steel floor of the submarine. She had a large B and the figure 6 painted on her conning-tower and in the bows. Then up came another officer, almost a boy, followed by a bull-necked sailor and the B6 swung around and sped off towards the land where, after carrying the wounded commander below, they sank and doubtless made good their escape, since so occupied were we all with our own vessel we gave little thought to our small destroyer and in the flurry she disappeared, as far as I know, unscathed.

"But what of the 'Pavel I.' you will ask? Ah, Otto, to write of her almost makes me weep. We had been struck fair in the centre between two compartments and

these flooded in a trice and the pressure of water speedily burst five more. Eight minutes' grace was all we were allowed before the water finally closed over one of the finest and most powerful of our war-ships. And over half the crew went down with her, as also eighteen officers. It has been a great blow to us all and a feeling of depression, a very dangerous feeling, is taking the place of the elation we have all felt until now.

"Well, Otto, that is my story. Doubtless you have seen fuller details in the papers—for the present I have not the desire to describe the heartrending and horrible scenes I witnessed that evening. They really were too ghastly for words to picture. I suppose we must have our ups and downs, but I scarcely see the 'walk-over' we were led to anticipate. By the bye, it is rumoured, though I do not know on what authority, that the 'Dreadnought' is afloat again and has been repaired and is ready for sea once more. If so we must anticipate some hard knocks soon.

"Is it true that the Kaiser is coming to help us? I hope so, as his presence would give us just the fillip we require, and we do want some bucking up, I assure you. A general assault took place on Portsmouth last night and it is hoped the first line of fortifications will have been breached. It will prove a difficult task, since these Englishmen fight like demons and we have lost nearly eight men to their one I am told. That we shall eventually win we none of us doubt for a moment, but these reverses are far from good for the morale of our men.

"This letter must end now, old friend, for the post boat leaves in two minutes and I want you to get this as soon as possible—it is fulfilling my old promise of one letter a week, and I regret I should on two occasions have broken it.

"Kind greetings to the wife of your heart and my brave little God-son and with best affection,

"Your devoted
"Bruno von Ehrenfeld."

Thus did the news of the great disaster to Germany's naval forces reach a well-known Teuton citizen and the effect may well be imagined. And on Friday morning of September 24th, the watchers on Victoria Fort saw a small ship rolling slowly in on the early tide. B6 drew up alongside the floating dock behind Block House Battery and disgorged a weary crew bearing tenderly and with infinite care the unconscious form of Commander Nelson. Lieutenant Fitz-Herbert followed, also under assistance, with his left arm in a sling and his head bound up. But they came with good news to a town oppressed with bad news,—for the outer line of defences had at last fallen before the terrible onslaughts of a far more numerous foe.

And Nelson was taken to the Hospital and guarded with loving care—for him the remainder of the war was to have no interest; five times had he been hit and yet he lived to tell the tale and, moreover, to receive a well-merited reward for it. Beside him there sat all day a tender young nurse, nurse by voluntary desire—and a royal princess. Princess Alexandra, distracted by the lack of news of the man she loved so dearly, had sought a solace in the strenuous organisation and whole-hearted support of the Ladies' Red Cross Society. And when the capture of Portsmouth became the obvious aim of the enemy, she courageously insisted upon being there amongst the men of the sea—the sight of uniforms and ships comforted her, and she loved that brine-scent

spread so lavishly along the English coasts. Behind it all lurked a thought, to which perchance the wish had been the father, that the ship in which her husband served might come in, either as prize or victor; and be it which it may, she would be there to bid him welcome to her heart.

And so she had waited and worked and watched, ever hoping, ever praying. How she attended the wounded can be told by them only; no such tenderness of feeling, so exquisite a grace and compassion had ever lightened the convalescence of an injured man or cheered the last moment of a departing soul. Nelson came in, insensible, unseeing, but covered with a great glory worthy the name he bore; straightway went the Princess and demanded the right to make him her especial charge,—and Fitz-Herbert also came into her sphere of governance and care; for a bullet through the arm and a damaged ear required some little rest.

Yes, the outer defences had at last been pierced. The assault of the night before, in spite of gigantic losses to both sides, had proved successful for the Germans, and many thousand Teuton fighting men were being poured into the hardly gained breach to consolidate the position thus captured. Over sixty thousand paid the toll in that one night on the two sides, yet to the enemy the gain was fully worth the sacrifice. Glad were the invaders at this success,—and the news was cabled hurriedly to the Fatherland, for there a little encouragement was badly needed. Yet if the defence had been stubborn before, the energy displayed therein now was more than redoubled and the “walk-over” anticipated was destined never to come off. For against the inflowing troops every available man was sent who could be

spared from other work. Moreover an extra five thousand men were despatched from the Dockyard to aid their fellows, for the number of ships raised and repaired was sufficient for the needs of Sir John Angler, though many finishing touches had to be given ere they, as a squadron, could be declared ready for sea.

Amongst those quite complete was H.M.S. "Dreadnought," and she, in consort with half a dozen others, lay moored alongside the Railway jetty, stray wisps of steam flickering around her great, squat funnels. Steam was kept up in all, indeed, capable of moving, for as a last resource the ships would have made out to sea and given battle without awaiting final preparations. But the time had not yet come for striking a last blow at the enemy—the Admiralty were possessed of information which if acted upon at the right moment would ensure success for the British arms. And of this information the Germans would also appear to have had an inkling, so the situation resolved itself into a continuous and desperate struggle for the last trick in this great world drama.

And the trump card was the Japanese Fleet.

If the fortress fell within three days, the British naval remnants would be forced to fly and face unaided the numerically superior forces of the enemy,—with the pretty certain result of absolute annihilation. But if the town could hold out a little longer, the Japanese fleet would arrive upon the scene to help their sorely pressed allies, and of a certainty turn the balance in favour of Great Britain.

In other parts of England matters were also going badly. Squadrons of German vessels had made a tour of the coasts and, finding landing in most cases an impossibility, had bombarded the sea-port towns, causing

an immense amount of damage to property and killing many thousand innocent people. The British defence, too, had fallen back towards the west, even the splendid organisation of Lord Kitchener proving futile against the tremendous onslaught of vastly stronger forces, with a far higher military training. And worse still, a further army corps had succeeded in effecting a landing on the Suffolk coast and had there securely established itself until re-enforcements and stores in sufficient quantity could arrive and allow of an advance southwards to press London from the north.

But far away in the northern counties men were drilling and shooting,—shooting always and at all distances. Rifle clubs joined forces under experienced officers and daily these men, toilers for their livelihood in times of peace, were becoming more and more soldierly, more and more a danger to the invader and a hope for their country. Yet the time had not yet come. To hurl raw levies against the stolid, life-drilled Teutons would have been worse than useless; England had to suffer,—suffer and wait—wait and hope.

In the midst of all this uncertainty a piece of news reached the ears of Admiral Angler—Marconied in a cypher that he alone could read to the signal-station at Portsmouth. And gallant Sir John whistled aloud and commenced a sort of cake-walk round the little circular table—then re-read the cypher and again whistled.

After a moment's thought he rang a bell, and an orderly having presented himself, Sir John Angler handed him a hastily written note to be taken with all speed to Captain Madden of H.M.S. "Dreadnought." In fifteen minutes this well-known officer made his appearance.

"When can you start on—shall we say—a scouting expedition, Captain Madden?"

" Give me two hours, Sir John, and we can get away at any speed you wish."

" Good. Well then, in two hours the " Dreadnought " and six destroyers are to leave the harbour preceeded by four mining vessels. Indeed, you had better set them to sweeping the passage at once, since this matter is of too great importance to risk an accident. I do not anticipate that any mines other than our own have been laid down, our watch has been too good ; but we must take no chances."

And the people of Portsmouth received a shock when they saw the " Dreadnought " and her six satellites steaming alone out towards the open sea.

But greater surprises awaited them !

And greater surprises awaited the Germans !!!

CHAPTER XXII.

The Dreadnought shows her Teeth

Have you ever seen the "Dreadnought?"

No? Well, then, you have little idea of this vessel and the mere mention of her name carries no more with it than the thought of something huge that floats. It is now five years since the Russo-Japanese War and during that time the experience then gained has been put into practice. Of the experience from the land-fighting, I will not speak; but of the sea a word may well be said. Capital ships (as experts are wont to call all vessels meet to lie in line) had, until the year 1904, been of one set type—though differing one from the other in minor essentials. And this type embodied in a hull of between 13,000 and 16,000 tons, a solid armour protection, a speed in the region of 18 kts.; and lastly an armament of four heavy guns and a dozen or more of intermediate size.

Then came Togo's battle of August 10th, 1904, and May 27th, 1905, when, in the Battle of the Sea of Japan, the Russian Fleet was either sunk or captured by their veteran yellow foe-men. In these actions the big guns told and the smaller weapons proved comparative failures. As a result the ideas of naval constructors underwent a profound change,—ships must in future carry nothing in the nature of a secondary armament, the main armament being vastly increased. A Committee on Designs was formed in England under the Presidency of Sir John Angier and of it were all the famous scientific naval experts of the day. They talked and talked and talked, —and then decided.

Sir Philip Watts, the Director of Naval Construction, had had an idea. The idea he propounded to his colleagues on the Committee,—and they were sceptical.

"It can't be done," said one.

"The speed will never be made," cried another.

"The hull can't stand the strain of so many heavy guns," blurted a third. But Sir Philip stuck to his IDEA.

The IDEA was as follows.

"I will design, build and put into commission in sixteen months a vessel of over 18,000 tons displacement, capable of steaming at least 21 kts: and having a broadside fire of 8-12 in. guns and a fore and aft fire of 6 weapons of similar calibre. She shall be immune from torpedo attack, proof against all guns at 7,000 yards range and with the means of steaming to Canada and back on a single load of fuel."

Now Sir Philip was no novice,—Japan owed him a debt for the ships she possessed. And so at Portsmouth the "Dreadnought" was laid down. She was launched in February, 1906—five months only on the stocks, mark you!—ran her trials in October and November of the same year and in the first month of 1907 went forth as flagship of the Home Fleet under H.S.H. Prince Louis of Battenberg.

Then came the Review and the attack. A month,—and the "Dreadnought" was ready for fight,—"looking for trouble" her men said.

For a day the huge ship steamed slowly east, her smaller brethren, the destroyers, spread out in advance over a very wide area of sea, covering, indeed, a line of ninety miles, though this narrowed as they closed up towards the Straits of Dover. Sir John, who was on board, sat in the captain's cabin forward of the conning

tower and read Mahan's latest book for the third time. Yet his thoughts were not in his task ; they lay concentrated upon the wireless telegraphic machine at which an operator was constantly stationed. He was taking a very big risk, he knew,—but the prize he had come for was well worth it. It may be suggested that, since four or five more ships were in every way ready for sea, he might have come out with a powerful squadron to carry out his object,—whatever it was.

But Sir John remembered that engines were never infallible, and the breaking down of a single ship must of necessity jeopardize the whole, unless the damaged vessel were left to the mercy of the enemy. The "Dreadnought" was fitted with turbine engines and these could be well relied upon to stand any strain ; moreover, alone she could run away from any German battleship, if need be, and could blow to pieces any armoured cruisers capable of catching her. The destroyers, by reason of their great speed, could easily escape any hostile craft, though should one by chance be sunk or captured the loss would be trifling. Therefore had he brought them to scout for him in preference to cruisers of a more valuable nature, and not so fast.

On the second day, as calm and smooth as when he started, Sir John was standing on the star-board observation tower, scanning the clear-cut horizon with his glasses. The warship was slicing the oily swells with imperceptible motion, for the speed had been reduced to twelve knots,—as much to ease the destroyers as anything else. Towards eleven o'clock a messenger rushed post-haste up to him and saluted.

"The 'Ghurka' is speaking us, sir."—

Down slipped the little, old sailor, a broad smile of satisfied expectancy spreading over his wizened features. And on a slate he read this message.

"Five ships steaming due east at speed. Am closing to investigate."

Eight minutes of intense excitement passed, and again the instrument spoke its news,

"One battleship of 'Deutschland' type and four smaller vessels."

And again in three minutes

"Small ships are cruisers of 'Hertha' class."

"Beggar my eternal soul," yelled the Admiral to Captain Madden, "if the fools are not running to meet me. Is all ready to give them a warm welcome?"

"Aye, that it is. What range would you like as a start?"

"Say, ten thousand yards and then close to seven,—but not nearer, mind. By the bye, stop as many of the cruisers as possible; indeed, I think we should disable all of them or we shall be having the whole German fleet down on top of us."

"I'll see that the best is done, Sir John. Shall I order the other destroyers to close us as quickly as possible?"

"Yes, but they are not to take part in the action."

In fifty minutes the look-out in the telemeter platform saw three destroyers tearing at over thirty knots back to the parent ship—then a fourth, then a fifth and lastly a sixth. But as the latter came in sight a smudge of smoke appeared over the horizon ahead and presently the enemy's craft could be distinguished speeding towards them.

"This will be a pretty game, Madden, will it not?" cried the smiling Admiral across the breeze, now augmented by the twenty knot speed of the battleship.

"Aye, aye sir,—but devilish poor fun for the Germans, if our gunners keep their heads."

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By this time the Teuton ships had risen above the horizon and were nearly within range of their English foe. They steamed in curious formation. First were two three funnelled cruisers of about 6,000 tons,—fine, weatherly ships, well armed but poor in speed. Behind them ploughed a great battleship bristling with gun-turrets and with smoke pouring in clouds from the three immense smoke-stacks between the towering military masts. Behind, another pair of cruisers of a type similar to the first.

"Good odds, five to one," muttered Sir John as he made a small calculation on the corner of a chart. The calculation was the following:

1 Ship, 18,000 tons	5 Ships, 37,000 tons
Speed 21½ knots	Speed 18 knots
Guns, 10—12-in B.L.	Guns, 4—11-in B.L.
27—3-in Q.F.	8—8.2-in Q.F.
	14—6.7-in Q.F.
	32—5.9-in Q.F.
	52—3.4-in Q.F.

Nationality, ENGLISH.

Nationality, GERMAN.

"That last detail makes things more equal," he said as he smudged the figures with a piece of indiarubber.

"Getting into range, sir," said a voice.

Sir John was up on deck in a trice. No conning tower below decks for *him*—he must see what's going on.

The four hostile cruisers had steamed between the two battleships as though to protect the German vessel, which was seen to be making away at full speed.

"D—d plucky that, Madden" said Sir John, on remarking the manœuvre,—"they have no armour to face our heavy metal."

"There would almost seem to be some reason for it, Sir John. I should think they either have someone on board that battleship who is important, or else her captain is a cowardly skunk."

"Captain, I'll let you into a secret. That ship is the 'Elsass.'"

"Yes,—and!—" queried the Captain.

"The Kaiser is on board! ! "

"Good Lord! but we may kill him?"

"We must take the risk. But tell the men not to aim further aft than the main-mast."

Two minutes of suspense and then came a resounding crash.

Bo—o—o—m! Boom—om—oom! ! !

("Cricky! lucky the old 'un served out waddin' fer our ears, ain't it, Bill," yelled an excited Marine.)

Six great shells weighing each 850 lbs. sped away; three smashed crackling into two of the cruisers.

"Beggar the fools" cried Sir John, stamping angrily on the deck, "three misses after all our training!"

Boom! Bo—o—o—om! ! Bo—oom! ! !

Another six,—and this time five fair hits. The "Freya," the first cruiser, sank spouting; three shells had found her, of which two had landed in the engines and magazines. The "Hertha" shivered in her path, rolled, jumped forward again and stopped for good,—with a nasty list to port. The "Vineta" was making circles with steam pouring from huge gaps where her foremost funnels had once been. Her main-mast was lying across the after-most gun-barbette and it was evident she was completely done for.

The fourth cruiser was speeding after the battleship towards the land,—now just visible above the horizon. Signalling to the destroyers to attend to the two disabled

ships, the "Dreadnought" went full steam ahead for the flying enemy. A word was sent down to the gunners of the fore-barbette.

"Stop that adjectived cruiser, sir? yes sir, certainly, sir."

P.O. Moggins sighted his gun and loosed off.

Missed!

"Cock-eyed idiot," complimented a neighbouring snotty, with withering contempt.

P.O. Moggins wiped a grimy arm across his perspiring brow, cursed liberally, and began over again.

Bang!

A sheet of flame hid the cruiser for a short second,—and then gave way to a vast impenetrable cloud of steam and smoke. The missile had hit her under the counter as she lifted on a swell and had carved a way right through to the engine room, exploding in the after-most group of Belleville boilers.

P.O. Moggins shook hands in silence with a loader and spat lustily on a bleeding scratch along his muscular arm.

"Got the blighter fair, mate."

"Aye,—gave 'im 'ell it seems, thanks be!"

"Wot oh! cocoa-nuts noaw? Ladies 'arf way and all bad nuts returned—I *don't* think !!"

"Close yer mouth, fat 'ead and get to work."

It will be noticed that no mention has been made of damage received by the "Dreadnought"; the reason is simple,—she had only been hit five times by the cruisers and each of these fell upon her thickly armour-clad sides. She had been fought well outside the range of their pop-guns, (they were little more at 9,000 to 10,000 yards) but where her own weapons told with devastating effect.

But now the time had come to close up. To fire at the stern of the "Elsass" would have endangered the life of the august passenger,—and that Sir John Angler did not wish. So at nearly twenty-two knots the "Dreadnought" sped along and every minute diminished the distance between the two ships, for the "Elsass" was heavy laden and thick be-weeded and scarce did seventeen knots as against the 18.7 she had accomplished on trial.

In an hour they had closed to four miles and here the German battleship commenced a steady fire at her inexorable enemy. Boom! went her big eleven inchers and Boom! they went, —— Presently a crash sounded somewhere astern and Sir John was told a shell had burst against the after conning-tower.

Eight killed and five wounded.

Crash! ! a second great steel projectile gnawed into the hard plate of the centre barbette.

Sir John grated his teeth and asked for the range.

"Five thousand eight hundred," came the answer.

"At five thousand give her six in the centre," said Sir John, and at the earnest entreaty of Captain Madden he went below to the conning tower.

One minute,—two minutes,—three minutes; quite an eternity it seemed.

Six simultaneous explosions resounded above and a vast shock went hurrying through the water. Five crashes rang snappily across the still water.

The Admiral was on deck in a moment and looked to where the German ship should be. A huge wall of white smoke with darting tongues of flame was all he could see. Then it died down and the "Elsass" showed up.

A small white ball swung hastily up the only remaining

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halyard,—the Germans had seen the eight huge twelve inch guns being again trained upon their stricken ship.

She had surrendered.

A wild Hurrah! burst from the crew of the "Dreadnought," but the Admiral knew his work had little more than commenced and with set face ordered the motor-gig to be lowered.

Just as he was leaving, a signal came from a destroyer to the wireless operator reporting a large fleet of ships steaming east at great speed, from the direction of Portsmouth. As he stepped down the gangway he gave some final directions to the Captain.

"Have the ship swabbed fore and aft, ventilate her all you can, make the men eat a rattling good meal—and don't forget the guard of honour."

Arrived at the "Elsass," Admiral Angler sprang nimbly on board.

"I wish to see the Captain," he said to a petty officer who received him.

"Er ist tod, Herr Admiral."

"Then the Commander!"

"Er ist auch tod, Herr."

"The First Lieutenant is surely unharmed?" queried the gallant sailor, abashed at this unexpected tidings.

"Nein, Herr, er ist tod."

"Then who is the senior officer?"

And a young lieutenant who had hastily gone below to change, as he explained, his soiled uniform, came forward.

"His Majesty the Kaiser must come with me at once," said Sir John without further preliminaries.

"But,—but—" began the officer,

"I said—at once, repeated the Admiral with stern insistence. "If within ten minutes I do not leave here

with the Kaiser, this ship and all on board will be sunk,—myself included."

The Lieutenant understood.

"Very good, sir."

For six minutes Sir John waited, and spent his time in examining the damage wrought by the fire of the "Dreadnought." The "Elsass" lay over upon her starboard side and swung heavily to the recurring swells. The entire centre upon that side had been blown away, five 6.7 in. quick firers and eight smaller guns had been destroyed, whilst the engines and boilers were irreparably damaged. Two funnels had gone and the third was cut in half near the top. The fore-mast had fallen on the fore-castle, effectually putting out of action that pair of 11 inch guns. Of the 700 officers and men, 180 had been killed outright (a magazine having exploded under the conning tower) and two hundred were wounded. Never had so much damage been caused in a ship and it was evident that she would never again have a value as a fighting unit.

Sir John had been thinking as he looked at the awful rents he had caused. At first he had desired to take her to Portsmouth as a prize, but on second thoughts he decided it were better to let her remain where she was. She could neither fight nor steam,—and certainly he did not want the crew at Portsmouth as prisoners. A step aroused him from his reverie and he turned round,

"Your Majesty, it is my regrettable privilege to make you a prisoner of war," and he bowed to the Kaiser, who stood proudly before him.

"I am, of necessity, at your service, Admiral," replied the Kaiser,—and in thirty seconds the launch was speeding back to the British battleship, the German Lieutenant having been told that instructions would be signalled him later.

Sir John had a few minutes discussion with Captain Madden and presently the signals were being made in the international code.

As the Teuton Lieutenant read them, his face became ashen white,

"We have no further need of you. You may join your friends as soon as you can." And the "Dreadnought" was already doing 20 knots.

A midshipman gasped in relief, "Poor fools, fancy letting us go like that!" then he chanced to see his companion's face,

"Himmel! What is the matter with you?"

The senior caught his breath and tried to control his feelings; then he stammered,—

"But we are doomed,—doomed. When I said I was changing my tunic I in reality went below and opened the water-cocks to prevent our capture,—and we—are—sinking—now! ! !"

It was only too true. The ship had already sunk about two feet and was momentarily getting lower and lower in the water. Worse still, the "Dreadnought" was growing ever smaller on the horizon, Admiral Angler having no knowledge of the German's foolish act. Again not a boat would swim and perhaps more dreadful still, amongst those on board was the Kaiser's eldest son! His Majesty had purposely left him on board hoping by saying nothing that he might escape and little guessing he was thus in all probability dooming him to death.

A man rushed on deck. It was the Prince. The Lieutenant told him his story and how he had hoped the "Dreadnought" would take them in tow and, on seeing their sinking condition, rescue all on board. The Prince was a brave man, but his iron nerve was sorely tried by this awful news. He glanced towards the land, about

four miles away and then going below fetched out a small indiarubber life-belt.

"Lieutenant, your action was hasty," he said, as he fixed the contrivance around his chest. "Give instructions for life-belts to be served out and all men who can swim to take to the water and strike out for land. The current sets in-wards and the sea is calm,—they should most of them be able to reach the shore."

In ten minutes the sea was thick with bobbing heads,—but alas! many wounded died an awful death as the great battleship slid silently beneath the translucent waters of the channel.

The "Elsass" had sunk.

Meanwhile the "Dreadnought" with her royal prisoner was dashing at full power back to Portsmouth.

And to meet her steamed the entire German Fleet.

Five of the six destroyers were steaming level, three on the one beam, two on the other. The sixth could be seen astern coming up fast and signalling.

Sir John asked for information.

"'Tartar' signals she has German Prince and eighty prisoners on board. Can you slow and take over prisoners."

A short time later a sorry lot of German sailors stepped on to the "Dreadnought's" deck, saluting the watching Kaiser as they passed beneath the bridge. Then came a stalwart young officer, pale faced and limping, and as he reached the bridge he stopped, turned as white as a sheet and cried,

"Father,—you a prisoner?"

"Alas! Yes, Oscar, my son. But you are wounded," and rushing down he caught his child about the waist with a great tenderness and through the veil of kingship came the gentle sympathy of the man and the parent.

But the officer commanding the 'Tartar' had other news to give.

"I beg to report that we saw the 'Elsass' sink at 2.10, sir," he said, saluting.

The Kaiser heard a word and springing forward seized the lieutenant by the arm.

"You said, what? of the 'Elsass' you said?" he queried incoherently, a deadly fear clutching at his heart.

"The 'Elsass' was seen to sink, sir," he blurted in confusion.

"Gott in Himmel! it is enough," cried the King, covering his eyes with his hands in great anguish.

"You are distraught, Your Majesty," said the Admiral, taking the Kaiser gently by the arm.

"Distraught?" shrieked the Monarch piteously, tearing himself free and pulling at his hair in a very frenzy of grief, "distraught, my God! I am mad, mad. My eldest son, the hope of Germany, the Crown Prince, was on board the 'Elsass' and I hid it from you to save him from capture. My God! my God!! and now I,—I, his father, am his murderer,—oh! oh!!"

He stopped, grew rigid, and had not the 'Tartar's' commander and Admiral Angler rushed to help him, must have fallen. The shock had been too great for his anguished mind and he was carried below unconscious.

The three injured cruisers had all, apparently, sunk from their injuries and the destroyers had rescued the four hundred odd of their crews who were still alive. Thus of the five ships attacked by the 'Dreadnought' not one had escaped, while the loss on the British side consisted of twelve men and a midshipman killed, and forty-two wounded.

But the drama was developing in a most curious way. Far ahead over the horizon to which the 'Dreadnought'

was rushing, hung a dense cloud of smoke,—obviously the result of German coal, for the enemy's stock of "best Welsh" had long ago become exhausted.

"To be or not to be, that is the question," said Sir John to Captain Madden, "I have no wish to fight, but rather than make a *détour* I would dash through them. However, I am minded to try a trick on them first and see how it works."

And so when the fleets had closed to within six miles or roughly 10,000 yards, a large white flag shot up from the "Dreadnought's" solitary mast and a signal was made in the common code requesting a parley, as the 'Dreadnought' had something important to say.

No heed was taken and the German ships were getting so close that at last Sir John thought it wise to put about and run at level speed before the foe, whilst sending them the message.

And this message ran as follows:

"This morning attacked and sank 'Elsass,' Crown Prince being drowned. Kaiser and Prince Oscar are our prisoners. Desire your escort into Portsmouth, otherwise will kill prisoners.—Angler."

The German Admiral glared in astonishment at the message and ground his teeth in livid anger.

"Verdammter Schweinerei," he vociferated, "what can we do?"

"May I suggest that we first see if it is true," said the captain of the flag-ship.

"Good. Call for eight knots and signal the fleet on no account to fire on the d——d Englishman. We cannot risk his Majesty's life should this signal be the truth."

And so it happened that presently both pursuers and pursued were steaming east at eight knots, whilst the

British destroyer 'Tartar,' with flag of truce at stern, steamed boldly towards the German Admiral's ship. In a short time she was returning at nearly thirty knots with four German officers on board and these were soon on the deck of the "Dreadnought." They mounted slowly to the bridge and there were received by Admiral Angler and Prince Oscar, who led them to the chart house.

On a soft cushioned couch lay the unconscious form of their King.

It was all they had come to see.

Then Admiral Angler gave them a glass of rare old port, a lot of most excellent advice, and with a handshake, and hearty "aufwiedersehen," saw them off his ship.

Thus it was that the watchers on Culver Down were astonished to behold H.M.S. "Dreadnought," with the British ensign conspicuous both fore and aft, steaming back to Portsmouth Town under escort of no less than fourteen first-class German battleships flying the German flag.

What could it mean?

Still more astonished were they when the Teuton vessels, slackening speed, allowed the "Dreadnought" to steam through their lines and, after a dipping of the flags on both sides, steer gaily for the Solent. They marconied a question, "What is it all about?"

Back came the answer.

"The Kaiser and Prince Oscar are prisoners of Great Britain and the German fleet was escorting them into captivity."

In two minutes they knew of it in the Dockyard,—in ten it was all over the town and as the vast battleship glided slowly past the battery and into the Harbour, cheer on cheer rang out.

By wireless telegraphy, Sir John Angler was that evening offered a peerage,—but by the same means of communication the bluff old sailor thanked the Premier for his kindness, but press of work prevented him giving the matter the consideration it merited and for the time he preferred to be excused. As for Captain Madden, he stoutly refused to be made a rear-admiral out of hand, for, as he pertly put it, "why the devil should I relinquish the command of the 'Dreadnought' just as she is beginning to live up to her name." So they ticketed him away to come up for a baronetcy on the next list of honours.

And so it was in this way that the Kaiser landed in England.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Guns

General Baron Mugglestein was feeling a trifle happier. At least they had now driven the Britishers to their inner line of defences and presently he hoped to have them at his mercy. But time pressed and none knew it better than General Mufflestein. This resistance must be overcome immediately at whatever cost,—and so he called for his Chief of Staff and had a guttural confab.

"Ja! Ja! Herr General; this evening it shall be," and the German Generalissimo chortled as he felt his fingers sinking into the British gullet. Already he heard the choked voice of a dying nation begging for mercy, already he saw those fine ships at Portsmouth flying his nation's flag, already—ah! why look so much ahead? To-night's assault, overwhelming, crushing, and then,—the rest would follow.

That evening the attack was made. Colonel Max von Brummel led his men in grand style against the brave defenders. First they had been subjected to four hours' heavy shell fire and then,—*en avant*,—the infantry would do their work. Bravely fought the English, bravely and well, but it was not in human power to face such odds and come out victorious in the end. Regiment after regiment was hurled ruthlessly against the hastily thrown up barricades and earthworks backing on the already captured positions. In thousands men fell, in tens of thousands. Every device imaginable was made use of,—torpedoes, hand-grenades, machine-guns, land mines, staked-pits; at last, the mass told.

At twenty yards revolvers came into play,—but it was twenty to one, and the trenches ran in British blood; yet not all British, for to every Briton killed that day at the least seven Germans fell. The height was gained, at a terrible price it is true, but well worth the loss of life to the enemy. For it had the same importance in regard to Portsmouth as 203 Metre Hill bore to Port Arthur during the memorable siege of that place.

From it a clear view of the harbour and Solent could be obtained; guns placed thereon commanded the Town and—the Dockyard. And guns were ready at hand.

They were not very big guns; but they were long range guns, accurate guns and powerful guns. They came from Essen and had Krupp writ large on their curious yet simple breach-block. They had a calibre in inches of 5.91 and were 50 calibres in length; they threw a shell weighing exactly 112.4 pounds and threw it moreover a distance of seven miles at a muzzle velocity of nearly three thousand feet a second.

The hill was German ground at 4.20 in the morning; until 8 a.m. a myriad men built up emplacements under a galling fire. Then a further myriad were seen below; formed up and waiting for the guns. Six small traction engines,—“Little Giants” the makers called them,—tugged snorting at a brace of hardened steel-chains and dragging thereon was the lumbering sixteen thousand pound weight of a gun.

Puff! poff! puff! poff,—another little rest between the pants as a particularly villainous rut held the wheels; now, engines, do your best. Poff! der-err-err!! the cross-sashed wheels tore round unchecked and then held. Up came the gun bumpety, bumpety, bump, bump, bump.

But what matter the bumping if the gun came on, what matter the bumps so long as the ultimate object was accomplished. The gun reached the foot of the captured hill and the engines stopped. A twisting fling and a speedy turn,—the couplings are off. "Shu-shu-shu-shu-shu-derr-er-err!" away go the little machines for another death-dealing monster. Three hundred men are now harnessed to six ropes,—fifty to each,—and the word is given.

"Eins, zwei! eins, zwei! klapperdy hahn! klapperdy hei! eins, zwei! eins, zwei!"

Three hundred voices chant the refrain and the great bulk jolts unsteadily upwards.

Fighting is going on to left and right,—the position is now in favour of the Germans. Presently a wild Teuton "huzza" sounds strident down the wind; another position captured.

And the gun rolls slowly up; at noon the first gun is nearly up, a second half way and the third just being handed over to the men, whilst the engines career at their greatest speed to fetch the next.

At 2 p.m., one of the cannon has been fixed and its frowning muzzle already points south-west towards the besieged town. A young officer is looking through his binoculars towards the sea and searching with careful glance the most suitable spots for the distribution of his steel-clad visiting cards. And coming in from the east he saw a cloud of smoke,—thick and impenetrable, hiding all detail. A long cloud, too, made by many ships. The German fleet, no doubt.

Five minutes passed and again he swept the horizon; the second gun was getting to the summit and the eins, zwei! of the sweating toilers filled the air.

Curious! A single ship was making for Portsmouth,—twelve miles off, perhaps. He kept his glasses fixed on her but could make out little beyond the British flag, since she steamed bows towards him.

Curious!! A British ship, in British hands had just left a vast concourse of vessels that could only be German.

"Curious!!!

The ship speedily grew in size,—he looked more earnestly. Herr Lieutenant Eberkraft had taken always a keen interest in the sea and all things appertaining thereto. And his mind went back to the various Naval Annuals; that ship seemed familiar. Why, she had only one mast!

He called his superior officer and asked his opinion.

"What do you make that ship out to be?"

"Umph! She is very large, has two funnels and apparently but one mast and seems to have four or five barbettes each with two guns,—Himmel! what does it matter, Eberkraft?"

"Matter? Why, that ship is the 'Dreadnought' returning from,—Goodness knows where. She came, too, in company with a great concourse of ships and that puzzles me greatly."

"Silly youngster! what of it? In three hours we shall begin to blow holes in all their fine vessels."

At 2.20 the second gun was set as it should be; No. 3 was just coming over the crest, 4 and 5 were on their way and No. 6 could be seen far below suffering agonies as it shot swinging into, through and over ditches, ruts and holes.

"That completes the battery, Herr Capitaine," and Eberkraft sighed happily and started on a round of the six emplacements. At 5.10 General Baron Mugglestein rode heavily up the steep slope to see the first shot fired.

They had still quite three hours of daylight in which to play havoc.

But things were happening at Portsmouth of which the besiegers knew little. First and foremost, the coming bombardment was well known to Sir John Angler,—but in spite of this he smiled. He had no intention of allowing a single vessel of those under him to receive any harm; but he had rather an eye to dramatic effect. So he gave certain orders by telephone to certain folks on a certain height and awaited events.

"Ist alles fertig?" enquired the great General, as he looked long down on his victim.

"Ja! Herr General," came the ready response: a gunner pressed against the indiarubber half-moon shoulder-piece and, having been given the range, moved the weapon half an inch around and awaited the word.

"Fire!"

A gerb of flame and smoke sprang out, something sizzled and hissed, and a few moments later the watchers saw a white column rise shimmering beside the ancient "Victory."

A miss!

Now six guns were trained and the Lieutenant had opened his mouth to give the order that would send half-a-dozen shells tumbling into the Dockyard,—for the trifling error in range had been corrected.

But the word was never spoken.

From behind a protecting knoll facing them and a little below, came three men. The first an officer, the second and third men of the line bearing between them a huge white flag.

"Cease fire!" yelled the captain of the battery, and the gun squads dropped behind their weapons and gasped for breath after the exertion of loading.

"Their pluck soon fades, Captain," said the Baron,

with a satisfied smirk and visions of high honour awaiting him on his return to the Father-land a Conqueror.

"Yes, sir, I thought to see them take punishment better than that; but perhaps it is but a ruse to gain time."

"Ah, well: we shall soon know."

Slowly the three forms trudged up the intervening half-mile; at the last they stood directly beneath the twenty-foot high emplacement and with hand to head the British officer intimated in perfect German that he had a communication of the highest importance for the ear of the Commander-in-Chief alone.

They bade him come forward.

General Baron Mucklestein himself met the bearer of tidings and was handed a neat note with the Admiralty crest upon it. And in a dead silence this is what he read:—

My dear Baron,

It is with profound regret that I must ask you on no account to fire upon the Town or Harbour of Portsmouth. It has been my good fortune to take as prisoner of war your most illustrious King Wilhelm, and with him his son Oscar. His Majesty and the Prince are now my guests on board the "Dreadnought" and, in my capacity as host, I would not wish harm to come to either of them. You, I know, will join with me in this desire and when I mention that the first missile to touch a British warship will of a certainty kill His Majesty and Prince Oscar, the necessity of complying with the request at the commencement of this brief note will be self-evident.

With many apologies for my intrusion into your affairs,

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

John Angler, Admiral.

It is safe to say that at the precise moment, Baron Mucklestein was the angriest man in Europe. Four times he pursed his lips to swear, but even the rounded rhetoric of the Teuton language could give him not a little of what he required for the expression of his thoughts.

Baron Mucklestein was more than angry. Looking up he fancied he saw the ghost of a smile flickering around the lips of the officer who had brought the message. He thereupon lost all control of his feelings and, crushing the note in his hand, roared out:

"Soh! this is your rotten trick, you English pigs. By this you would thwart me in the very hour of triumph, by these means you hope to save your worthless skins, by this——"

"Yes, yes, General," said the Englishman quietly, "but what reply may I take back to Sir John Angler?"

"Reply? why this. That Kaiser or no Kaiser, Portsmouth falls to-day. You dare not kill the King."

"Very good. But I give you one more warning; Sir John empowers me to say that at the first shot from a German gun towards the town," he drew himself up and spoke slowly and deliberately at the Baron, "His Majesty, the German Emperor, and Prince Oscar—will—be—hanged—from—the — 'Dreadnought's' — boat-boom!"

"Gott! to have heard it said!" shrieked the maddened Baron, "go, I say, go—and the Kaiser be d——"

A glistening sword was at his heart and as young Eberkraft pressed upon the quivering point, he hissed:

"Curse the English, General, as much as you will, but the Emperor's name is sacred. Though I were shot for my act I would spit you as a dog before I heard that sentence finished."

The gallant Baron restrained himself with a tremendous effort and a painful silence ensued. The click of the sword against the scabbard-end broke the pause ; Baron Mugglestein advanced towards the young Lieutenant and taking his hand, wrung it warmly.

"*Captain* Eberkraft," he said, emphasising the title, "I congratulate you on your promotion. His Majesty shall know of this and he can never have too many officers of your stamp."

General Baron Mufflestein was a man and a soldier and before all things just, so, however humiliating it must have been to his self esteem, he readily grasped the justice of the young officer's action,—and felt gratified it should have been witnessed by the Englishman, who stood amazed at the turn of events. But he had to take back his answer.

"Your reply, General?" he queried straightforwardly.

"Certainly, Major," said the Generalissimo, "my reply cannot be other than Sir John anticipated. I will give you my word no guns shall fire towards Portsmouth Town, Harbour, or Dockyard."

"I thank you, sir," and the Major with his flag-carriers started back to their lines.

The General sat down on a cartridge box and put his head between his hands. For a few moments he sat thus, his whole massive frame convulsed in sobs. Half an hour before he had had the British Nation in the hollow of his hands ; their ships and docks were at his mercy, a huge army was on its way south from Suffolk to invest London from two sides, everything, everything seemed making towards a final and historic triumph. And now what was the case? Foiled! And more than foiled, for, as a true German he placed the Kaiser before all else and his safety before the honour even of the

Empire. Sir John's threat was drastic and has since, we know, received severe condemnation; but it is safe to say that without that threat,—and if necessary the Admiral would have acted up to it!—England would by now be a dependency of the German Empire.

For a time, at least, Portsmouth was safe.

And only three days more were required; then, it was expected, Togo and his gallant men would appear on the scene and after that —————?

Down in the Dockyard, things were stirring. Sir John Angler was waking things up a bit. Not that anybody had been slack,—the whole staff swore they had not ceased working forty-eight hours a day since the investment. Even so the indefatigable little sailor was not content. By right of power he seemed to be the ruler and autocrat of Portsmouth, usurped everyone's authority and expected all his own orders to be implicitly obeyed. Moreover he obtained obedience,—and a willing obedience at that, since it was well known that he had the cause of England and Empire alone at heart and had banished self, as always, to a remote place. It was a Saturday; on Monday the Fleet must sail—Sir John has said it; on Monday it did sail, but, as events proved, somewhat earlier than anticipated.

Of his prisoners he saw little during the first six hours, having many orders to give and much work to personally supervise. But then his thoughts returned to them and he set off for the "Dreadnought." The Kaiser sat in a lounge chair examining the surroundings through a pair of glasses; it is safe to assume that the sight of so many warships repaired and ready for battle came as a most unpleasant surprise to him.

Sir John saluted and waited a word from his royal prisoner.

"Well, Admiral, you have some news for me?" asked the Kaiser, languidly puffing at a cigarette.

"Your Majesty, I am directed from London to allow you absolute freedom in and about Portsmouth. May I suggest, for your Majesty's own safety, that you do not venture far from the ship; my countrymen are somewhat incensed at the moment and might unwittingly do you a harm."

"Many thanks, my dear Admiral, you are most kind. I will bear in mind what you say," smiled His Majesty.

A great thought came to him at that minute,—a great and glorious thought. He would in some way effect his escape and join his friends in the hills! It was a mere four or five miles and what is that to a strong healthy man. But how? The King knew he would be watched and wondered whether the slightest hope could be entertained for the success of his idea. At all events he must hurry.

Leaving the German Emperor, Sir John Angler went to the cabin of Prince Oscar. He knocked,—no answer. He knocked again, and yet a third time and as still he had no reply, turned the handle and went in. He started back. On the floor, at full length, lay the young Prince, his arm resting in a pool of blood. He pressed a bell and in a moment a doctor was at the side of the unconscious man.

"Is it a bad case, Murray?" enquired the Admiral.

"No, Sir John, nothing much. I should say he had stumbled,—perhaps through a sudden faintness,—and in falling had displaced the bandage. Careful nursing and feeding up will soon pull him round. I suggest taking him to the Hospital."

"Holy Smoke!" cried the old sailor, bringing a huge

fist with a bang into the palm of his other hand, "where are my wits? Why, *this* is the chap that's married to that sweet maid, Princess Alexandra, God bless her! Take him over this minute and I'll go myself and bring her to him. Not a word, mind, to anyone."

Half an hour later Admiral Angler was entering the Hospital doors; he waited until the stretcher with Prince Oscar had been carried to a small private room overlooking the sea and then set off on his quest. He found the Princess sitting beside Nelson, reading him the latest news of the land-fighting.

A bandage covered Nelson's eyes and his thin, drawn face reflected the eagerness with which he drank in every word of what he heard. At the sound of Sir John's voice he feebly lifted his hand and saluted, giving a whispered "Good-day, Admiral."

"Good-day, Princess, and good-day, my lad," replied the good sailor cheerily, "how are you feeling now. Lud! with such a nurse I should have been well long ago,—or rather I don't think I should ever get well so as to keep her always."

"Fie! Sir John, shame upon you. Besides, I'm very annoyed at your speaking to my patient without my permission. It might do him a lot of harm."

"Your gracious pardon, my dear little lady. We bluff old sailors are always doing the wrong thing."

"You are forgiven, you incorrigible Admiral. But what brings you here?"

"Can you spare a few minutes for another patient?"

"Of course, I can,—if Commander Nelson will let me off."

"Then come with me."

Together they went down the long passages and into

the seaward wing. At the door of the Prince's room stood a doctor,—one of the medical staff.

"He is coming round," he whispered, "and has asked for her Highness."

In a moment the Princess's heart told her who it was asking for her, a flush of anxiety suffused her fair cheeks and she pushed past the two men into the room. A nurse left the bed-side and closed the door behind her.

A glance was sufficient. On the white bed, his wan face toward her, lay her husband; with a glad little cry she dropped beside the bed and held him lovingly in her arms.

"Xandra, my Xandra—you here?"

"I have waited and prayed, oh! so often for this great happiness,—to have you once again, never to leave you, my husband."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Under Cover of the Night.

The Kaiser had not wasted his Sunday. He had spent it in mousing about the Dockyard with a show of great interest in the naval preparations which, should he be unable at once to rejoin his fellow countrymen, must inevitably rob him of all hope of ever conquering the British Empire. But he noted more; he noted that it would be possible to take a boat within the Dockyard without remark being made; he noted that if he once obtained a footing upon the mud-flats behind Whale Island his chances of escape would be more than good; he noticed that there were many small huts jotted about the yard wherein the men kept spare working-trousers and coarse jumpers, and he noticed more particularly that to pass by the policemen on guard, it was only necessary to walk up to them and by them as though the yard were your own.

Moreover the fates had acted kindly to him; his cabin window,—and a good-sized window too—lay landwards and hidden from the ship's great length by the gang screen.

At 10 o'clock on Sunday night a dim figure climbed in the shadow from a port and slid down to the stone coping of the jetty. He appeared muffled, had a south-wester cap on and was clad in a mackintosh of sorts. The yard teemed with men engaged upon the final touches to the ships, and this fact perhaps aided the monarch in his design. Thirty yards away was the first small shed,—a diver's cabin. He crossed hastily and

without ado pushed open the door ; nor was he disappointed in what he found, for the dim light cast its rays over a series of coats and canvas ship leggings, which admirably suited his purpose.

In a second he was sitting on a cask and his boots had been slipped off ; he drew on the rough leggings and shuddered as the poor cloth rubbed his delicate skin. Next came a pair of heavy sea-boots, a dirty jersey and an oily engineer's cap. With unwilling hand he pulled his beautifully waxed moustache and in a moment had reversed its trend ; no walrus could look more solemn than he, now, with the bristles all over his august mouth. Suddenly he heard a step and the feeling of a culprit made him hold his breath and stare intensely at the door. The steps grew louder and nearer, and at last stopped ; after a rough push a policeman's helmeted head appeared and a gruff voice called,

"'Ullo, mate, wot are you after?"

A second's hesitation and all would have been lost. But the Kaiser is a born actor and now that he was face to face with a supreme danger, his wits acted as was their wont. With a voice muffled in a dirty handkerchief and a direct stare at the intruder, he replied :

"Wanting a spanner, Bobby."

"Oh,—well it ain't there. Wilks told me to tell anyone wot come around looking fer it. So long."

He nodded into the dark at the King, cleared his throat and moved to the jetty side to spit. The Kaiser gave vent to a great sigh of relief and finished his preparations. He thanked a lucky providence and a sharp wit for his escape and incidentally wondered who Wilks might be. Then he set out, slamming the door noisily behind him. For a few moments he sauntered casually towards the fitting-out dock, where he knew several small rowing dinghies lay.

A man standing in the shadow shouted to him and he gave a guilty start, but asked, readily enough, and in good lingo,

"Wot?"

"Don't 'wot' me, Lazy. There's too much work and too little workers in this ere yard; if I sees you skulking agin, hup goes your name and hout you go. Are you working the 'Dominion'?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, get a move on quick."

Away went the harassed King in the direction indicated,—the direction he desired, by the way. He cursed all overseers and dockyard spies in general and this one in particular.

This was his last encounter. At the steps in the dock he found many boats and, taking the bull by the horns, jumped from one to the other until he had reached the outermost. It was here lighter than day, a hundred powerful arc-lamps casting their penetrating light everywhere. In a moment the painter was untied and he seized an oar. The Kaiser has a painful deformity,—he is partly paralysed in his left arm and now found how helpless this left him. He had never learnt to row "fisherman fashion" with a scull fixed in the stern slot and wriggled in screw-like beats behind the boat. But he had seen it done on a hundred occasions and meant to try it now. He pushed off and had got some yards clear when a voice hailed him and asked his destination.

"The Hulks" he yelled back, and worked like a demon with his sound right arm. His interlocutor was seemingly satisfied with the answer. In a few minutes the monarch had caught the knack a little and propelled his boat with some speed, clumsily it is true. He

bumped incontinently into a huge cruiser and was greeted with an imprecation and a loud "Be careful, clumsy fat 'ead"; he steered away under the huge stern and sped twisting and twirling out into the stream. Here the bright electric lamps could not reach him and the darkness took on a blacker hue by very reason of the white rays around the busy ships. Twenty minutes later he grounded on the mud and leaping overboard gave the boat a push that sent it far across the out-flowing waters; it was picked up opposite Ryde next morning having gone through the boom entrance on high tide. From that moment onwards little is known of the Emperor's movements. He has been reticent, but his return to his own camp dressed in a British soldier's uniform is accounted the most marvellous episode in the history of the war. Doubtless he came across a dead Englishman, hidden maybe in a thickly wooded copse and, changing clothes with him, continued his journey in the new disguise.

At all events, the Kaiser had escaped.

CHAPTER XXV.

A New Tsushima.

Sir John Angler sat smoking in his commodious cabin turning over in his mind the astonishing events of the past week. To him, it seemed, the tide of fortune, after flowing strongly in favour of the Germans, had at last turned and almost he could picture the impudent invader being cast back into the sea,—his sea, the British sea,—and sent flying whence he came, weakened and beaten. But a matter puzzled him; what to do with his prisoner. He obviously could not expect the foe indefinitely to keep a truce by threat of death to their monarch, and yet if they broke that truce, re-commenced the attack, and he still did not carry out his bonded word, it would be an obvious declaration of weakness almost fatal to his plans. Yet he had no desire to harm his Majesty; nothing in reality was further from his thoughts. It occurred to him that he might be removed north by a fast destroyer; but that again risked capture. At all events he felt happy that the Government had marconied a complete and unwatched freedom for the royal prisoner; though deplored the unwisdom of the course taken, it took some little amount of direct responsibility off his shoulders. And in matters of Kings and their like he was pleased to be rid of it.

Soliloquising thus he dozed, when a strenuous knock at the door brought him up sitting, with a loud "What is it?"

A junior officer rushed in with scant ceremony and cried,

"The Emperor is not in his cabin."

The Admiral started up and it required little eye-rubbing to banish all thoughts of sleep.

"The Emperor gone, you say,—but who discovered it and how was it discovered?"

"A rivetter went into shed 80 to find a lead plug and came across the Kaiser's boots and other clothes he had been wearing. He, of course, did not recognise them, but on bringing them outside, a passing officer, Captain Urquhart, identified them and came on here at once to report. We then went to His Majesty's cabin and, receiving no answer to our knocks, forced the door to find the Emperor gone."

"Good God!" ejaculated the Admiral, "if he gets away we'll have shells hurtling about our ears in a few hours. Send Captain Madden to me."

"Very good, sir."

And in a few brief sentences, Sir John gave directions for many things. First came the recapture of the Kaiser; this was a matter to be carefully dealt with, since if it had got about the town that his Majesty was no longer a prisoner there is small doubt but that the news would speedily have reached the knowledge of the foe and the result may be better imagined than described. So a hundred skilful police were distributed in all directions to effect his recapture; and to this necessity for keeping the matter quiet may be attributed the Emperor's ultimate escape. Second in importance came the ordering of the Fleet. By wireless communication Sir John had been apprised of the fact that the Japanese detachment would reach Portsmouth Roads by noon on Monday, and he had so planned his movements that the two fleets should combine and, under the supreme command of Admiral Togo, proceed forthwith to regain the mastery of the sea.

But this escape had cast a different complexion on matters. With luck the Kaiser might reach his friends in two or three hours and how soon after that the shells would begin falling about their ears it was not difficult to guess. So the Admiral gave a momentous order and simultaneously spoke the Japanese across the sea, telling them of his predicament. They were still some hundred miles away from the point of rendezvous and dared not steam at greater speed than fourteen knots for fear of their fuel running out at a critical moment.

It was twenty minutes past midnight when the escape of the Kaiser was first discovered. At 3.15 twelve huge battleships steamed slowly through the wide-flung boom, past the masts and funnels of still sunken ships, past the chess-board forts out to the open sea. In their wake were eight armoured cruisers, huge vessels, towering and heavy gunned; lastly some dozen protected ships and a swarm of torpedo craft.

One ship had been left,—the "Albemarle" of the new "Admiral" class; speedy and powerful, she was a great loss to Sir John, though her presence would have broken the homogeneity of the force he commanded. She had, unfortunately, lost a propeller against some sunken wreckage on the way out of dock. Need it be said that foremost steamed the giant "Dreadnought," very proud of her pre-eminent position and, by right of past deeds, well deserving the honour. The others were of four classes. Two "Lord Nelsons," 16,500 tons did they displace and steamed a near nineteen knots in full career; then, counting the Japanese "Kashima" as of their class, a string of five "King Edwards," vast vessels of 16,350 tons and mighty strength in battle both in offence and defence. Behind lurched a brace of "Majestics," the "Mars" and "Prince George," bearing

up well beneath a twelve years' service. Lastly steamed the babies of the fleet, "Swiftsure" and "Triumph," of but 11,800 tons; but they were known as the "Pocket Hercules," so strong were they,—and speedy too, even up to twenty-one knots if hardly pressed. A very telling fleet.

The cruisers are of less importance, though powerful ships. A glance at the list will show well their size and other points of note; they each played a part in the great battle as shall presently be set forth.

Having cleared White Cliff and Culver Points, the course was changed to south and away sped the leviathans, cleaving the dark sea with rhythmic swirl. A light flashed for a moment to the west and Captain Madden turned to Prince Louis, the Commander-in-Chief, and Admiral Angler (who came, he said, as sight-seer!) and remarked:

"That means an early meeting with the enemy, if I am not mistaken."

"I scarcely expected they would leave the Harbour unwatched, so our flight will have been aerogrammed to Admiral von Knorr the moment the first ship rounded the Wight. I'll have the men well breakfasted before the work begins," and turning to his flag-captain, Prince Louis gave the necessary order which was signalled to the whole fleet. As day broke, the stripped warships stood out clearly against the grey horizon of early morn, fearsome in their bulk yet, withal, comely. A few minutes after six, smoke was seen over the horizon; the enemy had been sighted since 4.15 by the cruiser scouts and eager eyes had ever since been turned in their direction. Admiral Prince Louis here made a division in his fleet. Need it be stated that the speed of every fleet is that of its slowest unit; hence, had Prince Louis

kept his force undivided his maximum speed could not have exceeded that of the "Mars," which on trial had made 17.7 knots. At this time her top speed was no more than 15.5, for she was a comparatively old vessel and her submersion had not improved her steaming capabilities. But of the other ships the "King Edwards" were quite able to maintain and even beat their trial efforts on service and hence could be depended upon at all times for 18 knots. The "Lord Nelsons," somewhat slower, had only been designed to steam 18 knots; whilst the "Triumph" class, though wonderfully fast on short stretches, had not had the best of luck with their engines.

So the Admiral formed two squadrons; the one fast, heavy and homogeneous, the other slower, somewhat mixed as to classes but very strong nevertheless. He headed the port column in the "Dreadnought," and some cables landward steamed the starboard line, Admiral Groome's flag flying in the "Lord Nelson."

<i>Port Column</i>	<i>Starboard Column.</i>
Speed 18 knots.	Speed, circa 15.5 knots
Dreadnought	Lord Nelson
Kashima	Agamemnon
Britannia	Mars
Commonwealth	Prince George
Dominion	Swiftsure
New Zealand	Triumph

The armoured cruisers received instructions to hold themselves in readiness to attack the enemy's vessels of like class, since it seemed unlikely that the German Admiral would risk his fast ships against the immensely strong British battleships.

Admiral von Knorr had been as fully occupied in

making preparations as had Prince Louis, and he also set his fleet in order. If you look at the list of ships engaged it will be seen that, as a whole, the German Fleet was a knot slower than their opponents. Indeed, the last two ships of the "Wörth" type were respectively sixteen and seventeen years old and, besides carrying no other armament than their six obsolescent 11 in. breech-loaders, found considerable difficulty in keeping speed at even fourteen knots an hour. It is therefore a charitable allowance to set down their speed, and hence the speed of the whole fleet, as fourteen knots. Again it will be noticed that in their fleet no less than eight different classes are represented, a heterogeneity fatal to tactical perfection. Of the German built ships difficulty had been experienced in obtaining the contract speed, few having reached 18 kts. on trial for the full time required and fewer still, as may be seen, having surpassed it. Hence the fast squadron as constituted had a no higher general rate than seventeen sea miles. This squadron, commanded by Admiral von Knorr himself in the huge "Retvisan," was composed of eight ships; the other, headed by the "Andreie Pervosvanni" carrying the flag of Vice-Admiral Fritz, contained the remaining nine.

Fast Squadron

Speed, circa 17 knots

Retvisan
Petropaulovsk
Slava
Hannover
Hessen
Preussen
Braunschweig
Czarevitch

Slow Squadron

Speed, circa 14 knots

Andreie Pervosvanni
Zähringen
Schwaben
Wittelsbach
K. Barbarossa
K. Wilhelm der Grosse
K. Friedrich III.
Wörth
Weissenburg

Certain features in connection with the opposing fleets are worthy of detailed notice. Firstly the superiority of the Germans in both battleships and armoured cruisers was almost as three to two. But it was in the armaments that England had her greatest weakness and also her greatest strength, if a very paradoxical expression may be allowed. In totals of guns, Germany far exceeded Great Britain, in every type showing, numerically, a distinct preponderance. But on further analysing the detailed statement given, it will be found that our foe were particularly deficient in guns of the largest calibre,—and it was these guns that told at Tsushima, when Togo placed himself on a pedestal of fame beside our own Admirals of a glorious past. It may be asked why the difference in calibre should be of such vast importance and the question is readily and completely answered when I mention that whereas the 12 in. gun fires a huge shell weighing 850 lbs; that of the 11 in. is but 562 lbs; the 10 in. gun shell is no more than 488 lbs. (English 10 in. 500 lbs) and of the German 9.45 in. weapon the projectile is only of 474 lbs. The hitting power of the opposing battleships, placed in parallel columns, was therefore as follows:—

	12-in.	11-in.	10-in.	9.45-in.	9.2-in.	Weight of Total Discharge
England	46	none	12	none	36	58,780 lbs.
Germany	20	28	24	24	none	55,824 lbs.

Thus though the Teutons had a slight numerical superiority of two heavy guns, we on our side had the decided advantage of being able to fire 3,000 lbs. weight more of shot and shell than they could in a single discharge. Yet this by no means equalized the fleets as

a whole for the concentrated fire which the Germans could pour into their far fewer opponents, gave them a very great advantage. The British tactics to be pursued were evident; if they got within five thousand yards range they must of necessity suffer from the tremendous quick-fire batteries of the German ships, which carried nearly two to one in weapons of medium calibre and five to three in the light guns. If, however, the range were kept at between 7,000 and 10,000 yards, the greater power and number of the British 12 in. guns must tell in their favour.

No sooner were the enemy sighted than Prince Louis made his final dispositions and, signalling all ships to hold themselves in readiness for maximum speed, he bore down to engage them. They too had adopted a formation similar to his own and came on to meet him in double column of line ahead. The great yellow sun was just rising over the horizon and its first beams struck clear into the eyes of the German gunners and sighters. Here was nature taking sides with vengeance. A sweltering autumn day threatened and the British tars slipped off all but their breeches, strapping the belts of these two holes tighter in preparation for the coming fray. By each gun were small plans, side-elevations, of the enemy's ships with the armoured portions marked in blue of various depths according to the thickness of the armour. These the officer in charge of the gun studied continuously and as information came down from the telemeter platform stating the formation in which the enemy were steaming, and the order of the ships forming each hostile division, he changed the plans until at last No. 1 represented the leading opponent, No. 2 the second and so on down the lines. The ships themselves were as pugilists stripped for the fight. Gone were side

rails and cowls, gone all boats and trappings, gone all topmasts and yards ; a short-distance Marconi receiver alone projected from the main searchlight platform, useful for action signals though short of range.

On came the two great masses, irresistibly, terribly,—every man in the two fleets cast a prayer to God, for themselves perhaps, maybe for their country, the country for which they were about to risk that most precious of all heavenly gifts,—life.

The British fleet steamed at fourteen knots ; an easy speed which could be raised instanter to fifteen and a half. Their foe were travelling at twelve for Admiral von Knorr realised that in the first encounter his two squadrons must act in unison and the outside maximum of the slowest was a bare fourteen miles an hour.

At six and a half miles, or about 11,500 yards, Prince Louis flashed out an order. In a moment it was acted upon and the fleet's formation underwent a startling change. The "Dreadnought" swung heeling to port at increased speed and after her the five "King Edwards" ; but behind the "New Zealand," last of the port column, turned the starboard column, "Lord Nelson" leading, until the whole British force was rushing obliquely across the enemy's bows at just outside the maximum range. The German Admiral saw the manœuvre and a thought of Togo's tactics rose as a spectre before his eyes. He had meant to do this very thing himself, but not until the range was within seven thousand yards,—for at that distance only could he take advantage of his preponderance in guns. Alas ! his country had given him good ships, good officers and good men but—feeble weapons as his main armament. Little remained for him to do but to follow the old, old law,—circle on the inner circle. Here again he was at a loss ; his foe had not only

executed the manoeuvre long before he had himself intended it to take place, but had also the advantage of speed and had been travelling fully three and a half knots faster than he when he turned. Was ever a strong man so woefully deceived by his weaker enemy!

But a worse surprise was in store for him for ere his signal to make the counter-move had been read by half his command, a dull roar let him know that twelve British broadsides were venting their steelen wrath upon the daring violators of English shores.

From end to end of the British line flashed a volume of fire and light haze. The air shrieked with hurtling projectiles as they winged their resistless way foe-wards carrying death and agony to a waiting victim. Cruel was this blast of Britain's fury and might, ghastly the result. With a rush the shells fell,—fell ah! where. On this ship and on that ship? some here, some there? No. Prince Louis had profited by the instruction from the Battle of the Sea of Japan and every gun that could bear in his fleet had been concentrated upon the "Retvisan" and "Andreie Pervosvanni."

The two British Admirals stood on the open bridge and with binoculars awaited the result of this united discharge. Suddenly Sir John dropped his glasses and turned to the Prince, his face blanched with horror,

"My God! Battenberg,—I never thought to see *that*! Its awful,—it ought not to be allowed!" As he spoke a second broadside rang out!

When the order to fire had been given, every gun from a 9.2 in upwards was trained on the leading hostile ships; as one the weapons spoke, and with a roar that those who heard it will never forget, one hundred and thirty-two vast shells were cast in an awful rain upon the luckless vessels. Of this number it has been expertly

computed that at least one hundred and ten took effect, though if one might base a calculation upon target practice of recent time, one hundred and twenty five would seem to be more probable. And this steelen hail was not divided. Upon these two, and these two only, did it fall. As a volcano, bound in the iron fetters of a thousand years, finds renewed strength and (from many centuries of tranquility) bursts forth in ghastly fury to rouse a continent or destroy a generation, so did these quiet, black leviathans of the Teuton power, steaming, unheard, across the silvery waters, suddenly undergo a transformation of which the like had never before been seen.

Their contour, a moment before clear against the dawning sky, fled at a nod; a blurred, hysterick rush of choking yellow vapours, belching great gerbs of scarlet bloody tongues, groaning in travail as a mountain forge of nature, rushed to the upper skies. Out of each side a sweltering cauldron of boiling water spread rain-wise with a fearsome spurt. Below, the calm sea gurgled, soughed and flopped; now rose in geysers high as church built spires, mountains of water bubbling, churning, spluttering; now fell again in ton-weights, sploshing the hidden decks, adding a watery inferno to a hell of fire, forcing new coils of stenchful darting smoke far over the adjacent sea. Roar on roar in a sudden quick profusion came from the stricken masses; howling shrieks rose to God through the baneful fumes as a thousand suffering souls cursed out their lives to a horror-struck Maker. Here a gun shot skewing like a darted straw and fell, a solid seven thousand pound weight, splash into the waves a full hundred yards from the vessel that had held it. A mast spun upwards, driven as an arrow from a powerful bow,—a funnel too; and still remained

the impenetrable mass of dark amber smoke, still came the sound of burning, bursting shells, still the dread shrieks of human beings in utterest depths of agony and suffering. Then the sound ceased and a soft breeze off the sea wafted in callous unconcern the hiding spume away towards the land. There lay,—one ship,—or what had been a ship! An ugly ram stuck skywards showing twenty feet of keel, the stern was submerged at least eight feet and the exterior appearance had undergone a terrible change. Gone were masts, funnels, conning-towers, davits,—nay, in a word the deck had been swept as though a garnered hall ready for a feast. But stay, something more was gone. One gun struck from a wrecked bow-turret,—the other had snapped off at the turret-port. Flames leapt about in startling levity; here flashed a crimson blade from an empty port and there, two hundred feet away, came a wisp of fire equally brilliant.

The interior of the ship was a roaring furnace!

But what of the other? Nothing,—absolutely nothing. The “Andrei Pervosvanni” had merely disappeared. It was not hard to conjecture what took place when one reads the account of the unheard of happenings on board the “Retvisan” as given by the forty sole survivors. In this ship one shell entered the conning tower from below, having been deflected upwards by an armoured glacis; it exploded against the solid steel top, and of Admiral von Knorr and his staff never a trace was seen again. The heavy conning tower cover was wrenched off and fell on the fore-turret, smashing it into the deck and destroying the port gun. Other shells penetrated the armoured deck and belt and burst amongst the boilers; these ships had been declared by experts to be immune to belt attack, but it was the second broadside following

as it did immediately upon the first, that created the maximum of havoc. Where the first shell had starred or cracked a plate, a second found little difficulty in entering and thus the tale of horror was unfolded.

Then the fires doubtless reached the magazines in the "Andreie Pervosvanni" and she sank in less than a minute, Admiral Fritz and her entire crew disappearing with her; for never a man was found. Only forty men were collected from the "Retvisan" and then she, too, sank, as was certain from the dreadful nature of her injuries.

It must not be imagined that during this time both sides had ceased fire; awed as they were by the effect of their initial discharge, the British Admirals had far too much at stake not to follow up the advantage so luckily obtained. Continuing their "T" tactics, the line was reversed and was now steaming landwards firing hard at the next two ships in the enemy's columns. But they too, had now reformed and, under the guidance of a Rear Admiral, Von Mannfelt by name, were gallantly doing their best to make up for the crushing disaster with which the action had opened. So he steamed on an inner circle and gave broadside for broadside in most brave manner, his fifteen ships having still a certain superiority over the British Fleet. Thus they manoeuvred for a long time, our ships for ever holding the range at outside seven thousand yards, the enemy for ever trying to close to within a distance suitable for their superior light quick-fire guns. Ship after ship dropped out on both sides and at last Admiral Prince Louis was looking anxiously southwards whence he expected help. With seven vessels he now faced ten; the "Mars" and "Prince George" had been unable to stand up against the more modern ships of the enemy

and had gone down, fighting to the last. The "Kashima" had been forced to run for the land for the "Dominion," (of which ship the steering gear had temporarily failed, having been shot through by a great shell) had rammed her, and had driven a large hole under her counter. She was beached by her gallant little Japanese captain who was so upset at thus being forced to leave the battle that he went to his cabin and placed a pistol to his head.

But he never pulled the trigger! His first lieutenant had seen him enter and rushed in just in time to prevent the foolish act and so saved him to accept a high distinction at a later date from His Majesty the King. The "Swiftsure" and "Triumph" had both been sunk, their scantlings proving too light to bear the incessant battering to which they were subjected. On the side of the enemy, besides the two ships lost in the initial stages of the action, the "Wörth" and "Weissenburg" had speedily succumbed and sank like logs. Then came the turn of the "Slava," sister to the ill-fated flag-ship of Rodjestvensky,—a crank, badly designed class. The "Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse" next showed signs of weakening and eventually stopped, signalling violently. Then, as though possessed of some changeable devil, she suddenly listed and without the slightest warning, calmly turned turtle! The "Zähringen" swam well until the mighty "Dreadnought" chanced to find her range; then she became a mountain of living flame, her speed dropped at once and the sharp ram of the next astern finished the work so ably begun by Prince Louis.

But in spite of this the odds were not diminishing and both the Prince and Admiral Angler felt considerable anxiety as to the ultimate issue. Certainly matters were not going as well as would be liked and yet,—if the odds be for a moment considered, it is astonishing, to say the

least, that by now the entire British Fleet should not have been wiped out!

Then occurred the most startling thing. The fight had, for various reasons, worked more and more towards the east and the open sea, and a distance of at least eighty miles lay between the combatants and the land. The Germans had been pressing their opponents heatedly and Prince Louis was almost for advising a run to Portsmouth to effect a few repairs in the shelter of the Isle of Wight, when a signal was brought down to him. It was to the effect that a fleet had been sighted to the west, steaming hard and signalling.

He rushed on deck regardless of flying shells and found Sir John Angler already there, peering gladly astern.

"By Heavens! it's Percy Scott!!" he cried, and commenced to caper like a schoolboy. The German Fleet had seen their new foe too; of a sudden they turned due east and, stoking up to the full as the fumes of black smoke testified, set off in flight through the channel. Up went the signal from the "Dreadnought."

"Pursue and attack in detail."

By now the new British force could be made out. It comprised six first class battleships, the "Queen," "Formidable," "Venerable," and "Implacable" of 15,000 tons and the "Glory" and "Goliath" of 12,950 tons. The "Implacable," which it may be remembered was forced by a leak to leave Admiral Scott's squadron on its way to Plymouth after the first great naval fight, had not been beached at all; her crew managed to stop the inflowing water by superhuman efforts and she crept into Plymouth at four knots two days later and with the rest of the ships that had escaped had been thoroughly overhauled and repaired.

These additional vessels turned the tables on the Germans with a vengeance ; but they had about twelve miles start and could still steam at least seventeen knots. Prince Louis's ships were all much battered and though one or two of the remaining seven might well have run down the German fugitives, none of them had sufficient ammunition wherewith to carry on the fight after the enemy had been overtaken.

The "Dreadnought," which possessed still thirty or forty rounds for her big guns, forged ahead and kept up a steady methodical fire at the sterns of the retreating foe ; for forty minutes this went on and then smoke was sighted far over the horizon to the south.

The Japanese wished to have a word to say in the matter !

Presently the ships of the Mikado could be seen tearing at huge speed down upon the luckless foe. Five great battleships were there, the "Aki" and "Satsuma" of 19,800 and 19,250 tons respectively, and immensely strong and speedy ; the "Mikasa," "Asahi" and "Shikishima," 15,200 ton veterans of the Russo-Japanese conflict, in the first of which flew the flag of the immortal Togo. With them the "Tsukuba" and "Ikoma," armoured cruisers in name alone, battleships in all else ; then lastly the "Kasuga" and "Nissin" from Ansaldo's Yard at Genoa, veritable examples of *multum in parvo*.

Seeing these new enemies coming hot-haste to finish the work so well begun, the harassed Teutons turned north and rushed landwards there by the shore to seek an outlet of escape. Thus went the chase. In front the Germans steaming at best to evade the glue-like pursuers. From the west came Admirals Prince Louis of Battenberg and Sir Percy Scott with a dozen battleships and as many armoured cruisers, from the north

came Togo swearing a deadly vengeance and bringing nine mighty forms to back up his oath. From the east —what?

Do you remember that disaster in the mouth of the Thames when the "Revenge" and "Trafalgar" were sunk by mines laid cunningly across the Duke of Edinburgh's Channel? Months had elapsed since that time and the "Trafalgar" had been raised and repaired, the "Victorious" docked and patched up and now they and the "Royal Sovereign," "Empress of India" and "Nile" were seen steaming across the German bows, having been telegraphed up from London immediately news of Prince Louis's sortie was known at the Admiralty.

What could ten battered warships effect against twenty-three of similar class and more powerful type,—not to mention armoured cruisers? The hostile squadron slowed down and a white flag spoke surrender to the encircling Japanese and British vessels. The German fleet no longer existed,—with the exception of certain little details with which I intend to deal later.

But what became of the German armoured cruisers? I hear asked. It is simply and shortly told.

Of these there were eleven to the seven English and one Japanese. But of the hostile vessels two, the "Gromoboi" and "Rossia," had already received severe handling at the hands of Admiral Kamimura on August 14th, 1904, and so badly were they damaged that they could not even when repaired be any longer regarded as first class,—indeed, for two years prior to their purchase by Germany they had been used by the Russian Government as Gunnery Training Ships, for which purpose, with their spacious decks and great accommodation they were admirably suited. For warlike uses the small "Bayan" class were their equals if not their superiors;

these three vessels and the Japanese "Aso" had been described as the finest fighting ships for their size in existence. But Russia lost much from a variety of causes. Firstly in guns of 9.2 in. calibre and upwards we had no less than twenty-two to their six and even their enormous preponderance in weapons of medium calibre could not make up this deficiency. And, too, in their eleven ships eight different types, sizes or classes were represented whilst our eight were distributed amongst five. The average speed of the British squadron was 23.44 knots, which, compared with the 21.21 knots of the Germans, was an advantage of which too much cannot be made. So when Rear-Admiral Jones in H.M.S. "Shannon" spotted the German fast craft sneaking round the rear of their greater brethren he went pell-mell for them and at a range of 6,500 yards poured in a well-directed rain of shell from his 9.2 in. and 7.5 in. guns. The smaller weapons were of little value at the distance though his enemy replied with anything and everything that was bearing. Just at this moment the fate of the two German flagships was noticed by both combatants and whilst the Britishers sent cheer on cheer out to the startled Germans, the latter felt a fear of defeat gripping them, a fear that gnawed at their hearts and blurred their eyes, that sapped their courage and crushed their nerve. So badly did they take this first reverse that many of the Teuton gunners blazed away with guns upon the side opposite to that engaged with our ships. The roar of combat stung the ear with its vivid recurrence, crash succeeding crash with unabating regularity. Presently the effect of the accurate British fire could be remarked; the hostile cruisers slunk south and bore away from their deadly foe, at last turning west and flying for Portland where they hoped to reach shelter.

One by one they dropped behind,—first the great "Gromoboi," and as the "Shannon" and "Drake" passed her on either side in hot pursuit of the remaining ships, they each fired a terrific broadside and loosed a torpedo at a range of 1,200 yards.

Boom! boo-oom!! came the howling of a giant burst; the torpedoes had both taken effect and they, with the scathing shell-rain from either side, rattled the badly-designed erstwhile Russian from keel to upper deck. As they left her astern she commenced to settle down and her crew, such as remained thereof, were right glad when a British destroyer came forward to rescue them. The "Prince Heinrich" was the next to go; she mounted two enormous 9.4 in. weapons fore and aft in barbettes, and these had always been regarded as far too powerful for her small bulk of under nine thousand tons. Their repeated discharge, therefore, ruptured her deck and a lucky shot of 380 pounds in weight happening to enter her stern and burst beneath the after ammunition hoist, the stern gun, which was firing as the British shell exploded, lurched forward, drove its projectile through the "Prince Heinrich's" own deck and fell, barbette and all, from deck to deck through the ship and eventually out at the keel making a hole of appalling magnitude. At once the stricken vessel commenced to sink by the stern and in three minutes nothing remained to show where she had been. Thirdly the "Rossia" dropped out,—and surrendered. But so badly damaged had she been by the perfect fire of the Jack Tars that before she could be towed to a harbour she sank,—and little loss either, for she was not worthy of repair.

It was at this moment that the "Drake," the only English ship to receive severe damage, was struck in the bows by two 10 in. shells from the "Rurik," a huge ship

of Elswick design and build and mounting four 10 in. guns and eight of 8 in. calibre. The great projectile ploughed through her and exploded over the first group of boilers, driving long steel splinters and nut-heads down amongst the tubes of the intricate Bellevilles and generally creating most fearful havoc. She dropped behind and at five or six knots an hour made for Portsmouth, arriving there just before her more fortunate sisters who continued the fight with renewed vigour. The "Shannon" and "Defence," our two mightiest ships, devoted now the whole of their attention to the "Rurik,"—she at least being well worthy of their metal, carrying as she did a heavier armament and being of greater displacement. In twelve minutes the two stern 10 in. and four 8 in. Q.F. guns had all been dismounted or smashed up and it seemed the battle was coming to a close by the wholesale destruction of the Germans. Here, however, a shell from the "Scharnhorst" hit the "Defence" on the stem-plate blowing a huge hole; her speed fell at once to under twenty knots and without her the remaining six British ships dared not close the enemy.

For many hours this had been going on when a movement of indecision was observed amongst the foe. For a short time Admiral Jones was at a loss to make it out,—then he saw smoke far ahead of the fugitives and guessed the truth. The newcomers could not be enemies since all the German Fleet had been engaged that day; they were therefore friends. And sure enough in twenty minutes the flying Germans were scattering in all directions beneath the hot fire of the Devonport division of armoured cruisers, the remnants of the Third Cruiser Squadron augmented by two ships that had run in past the German scouts from the China Station, making six

in all. Of these the "Leviathan" and "King Alfred" were 14,100 ton sisters of the unfortunate "Drake," another was the "Aboukir" of 12,000 tons and carrying two powerful 9.2 in. weapons and twelve of 6 in. calibre, the remaining three belonged to the County class of cruiser, the "Monmouth," "Lancaster," and "Suffolk."

And so it came about that whilst Admirals Prince Louis of Battenberg, Togo, and Sir Percy Scott escorted ten battered German battleships into the Solent, Admiral Jones steamed into Plymouth Sound with seven captured armoured cruisers. Of these seven, it might here be mentioned, the "Bayan," "Pallada," and "Admiral Makaroff" were handed over to the Japanese in recognition of the gallant part played in the action by a similar ship, the "Aso"; the fleet of our Allies would thus possess a homogeneous division of four fast, handy and powerful ships.

But though the bulk of the German Fleet had been either captured or destroyed there remained much work for the British and Japanese to do. This work was aptly described by one of the sailors as "sweeping up the rubbish," and was left of necessity mostly to protected cruisers and torpedo craft. What these did and how they did it is deserving of another chapter, but before proceeding to it it would be well to describe the direct result of the arrival of the Japanese Fleet into English waters and what Togo brought with him.

(A) BRITISH.

BATTLESHIPS :—	Displace- ment	Armament :			Torpedo		Notes.
		Speed	H'vy	M'dm	L'ght.	Tubes	
1. Dreadnought ...	17,900	22.4	10	—	27	5	
2. Lord Nelson ...	16,500	19	14	—	24	5	
3. Agamemnon ...	16,500	18.75	14	—	24	5	

								Run Ashore
4.	Kashima (1) ...	16,400	19.5	8	12	23	5	
5.	Britannia ...	16,350	19.6	8	10	30	5	
6.	Commonwealth ...	16,350	19.4	8	10	30	5	
7.	Dominion ...	16,350	19.5	8	10	30	5	
8.	New Zealand ...	16,350	19.45	8	10	30	5	
9.	Mars ...	14,900	17.7	4	12	32	5	Sunk
10.	Prince George ...	14,900	18.3	4	12	32	5	Sunk
11.	Swiftsure ...	10,800	20	4	14	24	2	Sunk
12.	Triumph ...	10,800	20.17	4	14	24	2	Sunk
			186,100 tons	94	104	330	54	

Average Speed, 19.47 kts.

ARMoured CRUISERS:—

1.	Shannon ...	14,600	22.74	4	10	30	5
2.	Defence ...	14,600	23.5	4	10	30	5
3.	Drake ...	14,100	25.3	2	16	19	2
4.	Natal ...	13,550	23.34	6	10	32	3
5.	Duke of Edinburgh ...	13,550	23.4	6	10	32	3
6.	Antrim ...	10,850	23.63	—	10	26	2
7.	Roxburgh ...	10,850	23.63	—	10	26	2
8.	Aso (1) ...	7,800	22.41	—	10	46	6
			99,900 tons	22	80	241	28

Average Speed, 23.44 kts.

(1) Japanese.

(B) GERMAN.

		Displace- ment	Speed	H'vy	M'dm	Armament:	L'ht	Torpedo Tubes	Notes
BATTLESHIPS:—									
1.	Petropaulovsk	19,800	18.43	16	—	22	5	Captured	
2.	Retvisan	19,800	18.12	16	—	22	5	Sunk	
3.	Andreie Pervosvanni	17,400	18.4	4	12	56	4	Sunk	
4.	Slava	13,516	17.6	4	12	46	4	Sunk	
5.	Hannover	13,200	19.1	4	14	32	4	Captured	
6.	Hessen	13,200	18.28	4	14	32	4	Captured	
7.	Preussen	13,200	18.69	4	14	32	4	Captured	
8.	Braunschweig	13,200	18.6	4	14	32	4	Captured	
9.	Czarevitch	13,180	19.6	4	12	52	6	Captured	
10.	Zähringen	11,830	19.68	4	18	32	6	Sunk	
11.	Schwaben	11,830	18	4	18	32	6	Captured	
12.	Wittelsbach	11,830	17.9	4	18	32	6	Captured	
13.	K. Barbarossa	11,150	18	4	18	32	6	Captured	
14.	K. Wilhelm der Grosse	11,150	17.8	4	18	32	6	Sunk	
15.	K. Friedrich III	11,150	18	4	18	32	6	Captured	

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16. Wörth	10,060	17.2	6	—	22	5	Sunk
17. Weissenburg	10,060	17	6	—	22	5	Sunk
	225,556 Tons		96	200	562	126	

Average Speed, 18.15 kts.

ARMoured CRUISERS:—

1. <i>Rurik</i>	15,240	21.42	4	8	34	2	Captured
2. <i>Gromoboi</i>	12,336	20	—	20	62	5	Sunk
3. <i>Rossia</i>	12,200	20.25	—	20	48	5	Sunk
4. <i>Scharnhorst</i>	11,500	22.71	—	14	34	4	Captured
5. <i>Yorck</i>	9,500	21.4	—	14	26	4	Captured
6. <i>Prinz Adalbert</i>	9,000	20.35	—	14	26	4	Captured
7. <i>Friedrich Karl</i>	9,000	20.53	—	14	26	4	Captured
8. <i>Prinz Heinrich</i>	8,868	20.1	2	10	24	4	Sunk
9. <i>Bayan</i>	7,900	22.3	—	10	24	2	Captured
10. <i>Admiral Makaroff</i>	7,900	22.55	—	10	24	2	Captured
11. <i>Pallada</i>	7,900	21.8	—	10	24	2	Captured
	111,556 Tons		6	216	352	38	

Average Speed, 21.21 kts.

(C) The Japanese Fleet that came from the South under Admiral Togo.

BATTLESHIPS:—

<i>Aki</i>	...	19,780 Tons.	21 Knots.
<i>Satsuma</i>	...	19,250 "	21 "
<i>Mikasa</i>	...	15,200 "	18½ "
<i>Asahi</i>	...	15,200 "	18½ "
<i>Shikiakima</i>	...	14,850 "	18½ "

ARMoured CRUISERS:—

<i>Tsukuba</i>	...	13,750 Tons.	21 Knots.
<i>Ikoma</i>	...	13,750 "	21 "
<i>Kasuga</i>	...	7,700 "	20 "
<i>Nisshin</i>	...	7,700 "	20 "

(D) The British Squadron that came from the West under Admiral Sir Percy Scott.

BATTLESHIPS:—

<i>Queen</i>	...	15,000 Tons.	18 Knots.
<i>Formidable</i>	...	15,000 "	18 "
<i>Venerable</i>	...	15,000 "	18 "
<i>Implacable</i>	...	15,000 "	18 "
<i>Glory</i>	...	12,950 "	18½ "
<i>Goliath</i>	...	12,950 "	18½ "

ARMOURED CRUISERS :—

Leviathan	... 14,100	Tons.	23½	Knots.
King Alfred	... 14,100	"	23½	"
Aboukir	... 12,000	"	22½	"
Monmouth	... 9,800	"	24	"
Lancaster	... 9,800	"	24	"
Suffolk	... 9,800	"	24	"

(E) The British Squadron that came from the East,
from the Nore.

BATTLESHIPS :—

Victorious	... 14,900	Tons.	17.5	Knots.
Empress of India	14,360	"	17.5	"
Royal Sovereign	14,360	"	17.5	"
Nile	... 11,940	"	17	"
Trafalgar	... 11,940	"	17	"

CHAPTER XXVI.

Lord Kitchener to the Fore

The British Government had taken a leaf out of the Japanese book in the matter of harnessing the Press. True, a deadly patriotism had made this a comparatively simple matter, all editors of repute readily falling in with the wishes of the Government and right loyally supporting them in their endeavour to keep secret any news that might prove of value to the enemy. Hence, the voyage of the Japanese fleet from Yokohama and Kobe to England had been kept wonderfully quiet, no news of its composition or position being allowed to leak out. Coaling had been effected at isolated islands and the progress west had been more carefully wrapped in mystery than even the voyage of Rodjestvensky's ill-fated assortment of ships. The mere statement had been issued early in July that a fleet had sailed from Japan and it was understood that it convoyed about 150,000 troops. So much did people learn,—and here authentic news stopped for good, nothing beyond conjecture being known to the populace on either side.

As weeks passed and weeks rolled into months, and still no sign was vouchsafed of the fleet of our Allies, certain of the cheaper newspapers, ill-advised and hasty, initiated a campaign of discontent against what they were pleased to term the tyranny of oppression and in scathing leading articles condemned the action of Government and Admiralty in general and the stern unconcern of Lord Kitchener and Sir John Angier in particular.

To the snarls of these papers were joined the disgraceful bickerings of a Little England set in the House of Commons, and a small body of men, unworthy the title of Englishmen, openly and strenuously demanded that peace should be immediately made upon the best terms secureable. In vain did the harassed Ministers reply evasively to direct requests for news,—in vain did they with skilful sentences shift responsibility always upon absent shoulders; the unpatriotic few, the bastard minority who had made it a pleasure to favour their country's enemies, nagged on until the mass began indeed to believe something ought to be done.

One day a riot started as the result of a number of inflaming speeches that had been delivered in Trafalgar Square, and a vast concourse of the worst and lowest marched singing down Whitehall and besieged the Admiralty and the Houses of Parliament. The remedy was obvious,—and Lord Kitchener applied it with celerity and precision. He had posted in every prominent position a notice stating that henceforth London would be ruled by martial law, that public meetings were not to be held under pain of death and that six men would in future constitute a "meeting!" People gasped and whispered vain threats against this arrogant proposal; what right had any man to tamper with the freedom of Britain,—Britain the free country, the model country? They asked one another this,—but quietly and without allowing more than four to hear the question. If a fifth strolled up, the grumbler ceased his grumbling and remembered (apart from Lord Kitchener's notice) other and pressing business. The police suddenly became more rigourous, and carried—revolvers!

And all this happened in a couple of hours!

The news thereof was taken to the house,—members

rose gesticulating and demanded Lord Kitchener's removal; the patriotic majority howled them down. Still they rose and demanded to be heard and presently a scene had developed such as had not been known since the days of Oliver Cromwell. A pandemonium of shouts and cries reigned in place of oratory and order, and as a final resource the Speaker endeavoured during a momentary lull to clear the Chamber. It was all in vain, but the news of what was taking place had reached Lord Kitchener's ears; he had expected it and sat dressed in readiness for the next act in this remarkable drama.

Mounting his charger he rode, at the head of a troop of cavalry, down to the House. Simultaneously a number of uniformed bill-stickers rushed to pre-arranged places and posted a second proclamation,—a proclamation as astounding as it was masterly.

It abolished, *pro tem.*, Government by Parliament!

In short, noticing that the speakers did more harm than good by their speeches and remembering that one tactless speech was apt to prove more baneful than a dozen sensible ones could be of use, Lord Kitchener had called together the members of the Imperial Defence Committee and told them that power of governance must for the immediate future rest in them alone,—as long, indeed, as a single German invader remained in England. To this they had perforce to agree, and, as true patriots, put their hearts and minds into their work and prepared for the dismissal of the Mother of Parliaments. This duty, Lord Kitchener said, he would himself undertake.

Arrived at the Palace Yard he drew his escort up around the palings to hold in check the immense crowds of people, come to see one of the mightiest happenings

of modern times. Then with erect head and military tread, he entered the sacred precincts and marching steadily down between the opposing benches mounted the Speaker's chair.

The members stared open-mouthed ; what could this intrusion mean ? How dared this man thus violate the laws of centuries ? What right had he to thus disturb their legislation ? He was not long in answering all these questions.

Amidst a breathless silence, born of great expectancy, Lord Kitchener spoke as follows :—

" Gentlemen,—I am not a man of many words and have besides, little time to spare for speech-making ; but my reason for this intrusion can be explained in a few brief sentences. For centuries it has been your privilege in this free country to debate and discuss any question or measure whatsoever without restriction. Though your patriotism as a whole has not and never will be doubted, it is nevertheless inimicable to British interests that matters concerning this war be openly discussed or debated, to be further commented upon in the less patriotic section of the Press. With a view to preventing the enemy from gaining further advantage through this lack of discretion, this Houses ceases to exist until such time as the Committee of Defence shall in the future notify. That is all I have to say."

To say the members were astounded is to put a mild description to their feelings. For a space they were too dumbfounded to utter a word. But the majority recognised the force and value of the General's remarks and walked immediately out of the chamber. Soon about one hundred alone remained. Lord Kitchener looked at them with an amused smile.

"Gentlemen, I can give you two minutes," was all he said, and looked at a watch strapped around his wrist.

Then at last the storm broke. Robbed of their power to damage their native land, their wings of evil clipped for good, the caddish section burst into a wholesale recrimination of the great man who was risking so much for his country's sake. Lord Kitchener listened unmoved, the same contemptuous smile playing round his hard mouth. Thrice he glanced at his watch, and at the third time he drew a whistle from a side pocket and held it to his lips. Twenty seconds passed.

"Time is up, gentlemen," he said and blew two shrill blasts upon the little instrument. In a moment many score of stalwart uniformed men rushed in and stood in a circle around the helpless and raging legislators,—now cowed into silence and submission by this drastic method of closing the House in which they so admired hearing the sound of their own voices. Again the General spoke, this time with stern insistence.

"Gentlemen, to have disobeyed me is treason, but at present I am prepared to overlook the offence. I have already delayed too long and must request your immediate withdrawal. All those still here in one minute by my watch will be imprisoned for six months; two minutes—and the months will have become years; but if three minutes should elapse before you are all gone, those still remaining will be summarily shot!"

There was a wild stampede and in thirty seconds the Chamber was in possession of Lord Kitchener and his men.

"They are not brave, these renegades," he said, and laughed heartily at the final ignominious retreat of the recalcitrant few.

He shut the doors and with his own hands locked

them, handing the keys to an aide. Thus did Government pass into the hands of the two most capable men in England,—Lord Kitchener in London, who initiated and evolved the moves in this great game of war; and Sir John Angier at Portsmouth, at the very seat of action, who directed the carrying out of Kitchener's ideas and superintended in person everything connected with the Navy. And these two, who were by Marconi instruments in constant touch one with the other, were ably supported and grandly backed up by a large and efficient staff of naval and military experts. Under them the British Isles speedily became one huge military camp and three days before the great naval battle, by which the mastery of the sea was regained and the major portion of the German Fleet either destroyed or captured, Lord Kitchener had told the King that at last everything was ready for a great combined forward movement.

On the evening of the day on which Parliament was so suddenly dissolved, the offices of certain newspapers, that had been making themselves particularly objectionable, were raided and the editors replaced by specially chosen men. These journals were published as usual, but their tone had suddenly altered from one of rank treason to that of trust and patriotism!

Lord Kitchener was working well for Britain.

If the censorship had been rigorous before, it was crushing now and it became a matter of common remark that, if one might judge by the papers, the war held little if any interest for the English. Occasionally a small paragraph was put in,—usually dictated from either the War Office or the Admiralty.

It might be thought that, now the management of affairs had passed definitely to the naval and military

authorities, all trouble would cease. This was not so. Smarting under a sense of injury, the four score or so ejected and unpatriotic legislators stumped the country crying their woes,—but, for the most part, into deaf ears. It so chanced that one of them, a man who had risen to a high position in a former Ministry in spite of his known proclivities towards Little Englandism, had arranged an immense meeting in Manchester for the very Monday night that the Japanese arrived just in the nick of time. About four thousand men, attracted by his great name and undoubted personality, had come to hear him and he was giving a strong, passionate speech in condemnation of Lord Kitchener's daring act. The Hall was moved by the studied vehemence of his address, and not a few of his listeners were carried away by his heated words and well-turned arguments.

"There, gentlemen, there are patriots for you," he yelled at the top of his voice,—"what think you we can "expect from such as these. What knowledge can they "possess of legislation? What is to become of those "important measures which the Government had given "its bonded word should pass this session? I say the "treatment meted out to us is scandalous,—nay, without "precedent and to be met with stern resistance.

"What of their excuse? That they may the better "conduct this iniquitous war, they say. Nonsense, I "answer to that, gentlemen—absolute nonsense. At the "back of all their fine words I find only one thing: the "awful spectre of self,—greedy, unrighteous self. What "would I do in the circumstances? asks a gentleman at "the back of the Hall. I thank him for the question as "it leads me up to the main reason for holding this "meeting,—a meeting of protest, I may term it. I will "tell him,—and you, what I would do and why I would

"do it,—and beginning at the end, my reasons for the "decision I have arrived at are the following:—

"Granted we were taken by surprise,—then I say a "grave charge is laid at the door of the Admiralty. As, "however, lack of foresight, and efficient preparation has "involved us in this dreadful conflict, what is our duty to "the people,—to the masses,—to you, gentlemen, here in "this Hall? What is our duty?

"I look around me as I go through the country side "and see nothing but sorrow and mourning: here a "cottage lacking a master,—he, alas! killed by a German "bullet. There a home whence came three stalwart "fellows, their mother's pride, adored, maybe, by sweet "girls; they also are dead. Each day Death takes her "toll, adding ever life to life—and with each life gone "out, a world of misery creeps in. Their workers gone, "the wives, sisters, sweethearts and aged parents see "starvation staring them in the face,—and if amongst "you be one who has lacked a good meal, he or she will "well understand what this means."

A cry went up from the back of the Hall and several sobs came from different corners of the audience. They had indeed to mourn many a loss,—and this man played well upon their unhappiest memories. He noted the effect of his words and raising his voice to its fullest power, spoke the sentences to which he had been leading up:—

"Ah! ah! am I speaking truly? Ladies and gentle- "men, I speake thus to good purpose. Remember that in "every war there *must* be a loser,—and the loser though "perhaps suffering in *amour propre* is nevertheless "chastened in spirit and ready to recommence life from "another standpoint. Is it so fearful a thing to be "conquered? Who has been beaten in his youth and

"not acknowledged the advantageous outcome of that
"chastisement in after-life? It is no great matter this
"'giving-in,' and, maybe, from evil will spring a fount
"of national good. This then is my advice,—call a truce
"to useless bloodshed, murder in the sight of the
"Almighty,—call a fruce and see upon what terms the
"blessings of universal peace may be obtained. Re-
"member this,—every dog has his day! Have we had
"ours? I think so and we must accept the inevitable and
"put as fair a face to matters as we may. The British
"Empire as a world nation has rushed to meet its doom,
"—England and her Colonies are come to an end—"
"Liar!!!"

A great voice sounded far at the back of the Hall and a bronzed man stood upon a chair calmly confronting the astonished audience. Immediately cries arose, some taking the one side and some the other, "Turn him out! Maul the man! He's right! Hold yer row! Why shouldn't he speak!" and so on through the whole gamut of usual hurled sentences. At the last the chairman gained a hearing and having begged for quiet announced that the speaker of the evening would be pleased if his interrupter would step up on to the platform and state his reasons for doubting the truth of what he had heard.

The man, a gentleman obviously, at once shouldered his way through the crowd and, mounting the platform, stood a moment breathing hard,—he was much out of breath as though he had run hot haste to the meeting. In a minute, and after a drink of water, he began as follows amidst a dead silence:—

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I can't speak for nuts so please don't expect a speech. By name I am Captain Leonard Harbnall, Government

"Supervisor of Telegraphs and Post Offices in this great city and I chanced, in the fulfilment of my duty, to fall upon certain information which I considered of interest to this meeting,—a meeting organised by the 'stop-the-war party'"—he spoke the final sentence sneeringly with a withering look at the speaker of the evening. The latter dropped his gaze feeling instinctively, as did the whole audience, that something was coming to render the gathering futile and a farce.

"I came hot-haste," continued the newcomer, "and apologise for shortness of breath. But my haste was well rewarded for as I entered the door my ears caught the words 'England and her Colonies are come to an end,' and it gave me infinite satisfaction to contradict the statement with some vigour. I believe I called this patriotic speaker, this exquisite Englishman," the last with crushing contempt, "a liar; I repeat my statement and will proceed to prove it.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—this man counsels surrender to a blackguard enemy and would throw up the sponge at any cost; he considers his native land as already belonging to another and would give it a helping kick on the downward path as he calls it."

Here the chairman and speaker tried to interfere,—but the bluff and genuine manner of the soldier had given him supporters and cries of "Let him speak," "You've had your turn," etc., induced them both to remain quiet, though it may safely be said no platform of ladies and gentlemen ever felt so uncomfortable or so frightened of impending disaster. The Captain went on:—

"This evening,—ten minutes ago,—a message came through to me and this message I give to you people of Manchester; it will I fear prove a blow to this

"reputable party upon the platform. England is done, "indeed! What do you think of this, then?

"British and Japanese Fleets to-day met and annihilated the German—" he got no further. Cheer on cheer rose from the excited audience,—louder and louder. But the news-bearer waved them to silence whilst he read the remaining telegrams copied upon a sheet of paper held between his hands.

"When I have finished, my friends, cheer as you will. "We can do with it. As I was saying, 'British and "Japanese Fleets to-day met and annihilated German "Fleets. All hostile battleships and armoured cruisers "sunk or captured. (Cheers.) One hundred and fifty "thousand Japanese troops under Generals Kuroki and "Nogi are now landing,—(Loud and prolonged cheers) "—are now landing at Devonport and other places! "Large Colonial Forces (Vociferous cheering, uproar on "the platform) are approaching Dover and other places! "Detachments of Indian and Canadian troops steaming "under escort towards the east coast! (Frenzied "outburst of wild cheering.) Lord Kitchener "leaving at once to assume supreme command for final "movement (Paroxysms of delight, howls, cat-calls, and "whoops of joy) Duke of Connaught takes command of "Third Army (Yells and further cheers) Lord Roberts "takes command—" but what Lord Roberts was to command was never learnt, for by now the entire audience was standing up—for the most part on chairs —shrieking, yelling, cheering, making, to be brief, an infernal noise; it was a fine outlet for their pent-up feelings. Just then someone noticed the ex-M.P. and Little Englander slinking gingerly to a door and raised a cry of:

"There goes the scoundrel; stop him, men, and we'll

mark him!" In a second the room was in a uproar and above the turmoil came wild threats of "Lynch the blackguard! Murder him! Wring his adjective neck! Let me just get a hand on him!!" . . . and such like remarks. But he had reached the door and seeing his audience thirsting for his blood behind him, rushed through and then turned the key on his frenzied and baffled pursuers. In vain they tugged at the locked door,—the stout bolt would not give; men were rushing to the other exits to cut off his escape when a fearful shriek of agony came from without followed by the boozing of a vast crowd.

Captain Harbnall blanched and calling to a few near him made for an exit.

"Come on, gentlemen, as quickly as you can, or your friend will be murdered!"

Outside the main doors a seething mass of men stood,—impenetrable, hot and angry. The gaze of all lay rivetted upon a huge arc-lamp standard in the middle of the square. Again an awful, dread shriek arose and before Harbnall or his friends could move a pace forward someone flung a rope over the out-hanging iron branch and in a trice the kicking, floundering sprawling body of the erstwhile legislator was tugged fifteen feet above the ground. They had lynched him!

A lady jabbered incoherently, yelled with wild laughter and fell down the stone steps, unconscious. It was his wife. A man beside Harbnall was violently sick and leant retching against a pillar, whilst somewhere in the crowd a guttural voice solemnly chanted a passage from the service for the dead.

"Oh, my God!" gasped the shocked officer, as the scene explained itself to him, "lynched! good Heavens; and he a Minister of the Crown! Poor Devil,—may he gain forgiveness in the hereafter."

"Amen to that," said a burly working man below him, "tho' e desarved it all the time, sir."

Then the crowd made a rush for the doors and a voice advised "Lets treat all the platform the same,—no favouritism." The scared men and women huddled around Harbnall and implored his aid; in a voice powerful as a bull's roar, he cried

"Stop! you have done enough. Would you help the Germans in their bloody work? Go and fight your real foe and be worthy your name of Englishmen!"

They halted, wavered, looked around at one another and started a wild cheer. A little group at the back commenced the national anthem and presently from many thousand throats rose that grand hymn, swelling with patriotism and love of the great monarch who ruled them.

Above all swung listlessly the body of the once Cabinet Minister, an intense glare shining on the dead clay from above,—to and fro; to and fro.

CHAPTER XXVII.

How the Yellow Men Landed in England

What Captain Harbnall had said was true ; not only had a large Japanese force landed in England, but considerable contingents from the more important Colonies had set off under Japanese escort to succour the parent country. So suddenly had the war broken out that many huge liners were on their way to or from the East and these, warned in good time, either remained out East or, in the case of those westward bound, put about and returned to their place of departure. And to good use were they put,—moreover the slow journey of the Japanese Fleet was now explained. It had perforce to wait at this port and at that to collect the many colonial contingents as they came in from their varied directions.

The Japanese Fleet in its original composition included eight first class battleships and an equal number of huge armoured cruisers, besides half a dozen cruisers of the protected class and nine scouts. These had in convoy forty transports and eighteen colliers and storeships ; amongst the transports were three great North German Lloyd vessels of about 13,000 tons, taken from the Germans early in the war, and two leviathans captured from Russia some years before. The remaining ships were all large, the finest of the Holt Line, Nippon Yusen Kaisha, Toyo Kisen Kaisha, with, lastly, the three fine "Empress" liners of the C.P.R., and little difficulty was found in accommodating the 152,000 troops sent west by the Mikado's advisers to rescue their monarch and aid their Ally.

But whilst the preparations for this immense force were going forward in Japan, similar preparations on a smaller scale were being hurriedly conducted in Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania and India. The Cape also was hard at work organizing and drilling.

Thus when the Japanese Veterans reached Singapore, a fine fleet of Holt and P. and O. Liners rode quietly at anchor awaiting them and from their crowded sides came ringing British cheers; Tasmania and Australia had sent 32,000 of their best, whilst of New Zealand's youth 12,000 had come forward willing to sail fourteen thousand miles and avenge the insult to a dearly loved mother-land.

After a fortnight's delay the armada of revenge set out once again towards Ceylon and in three weeks lay sweltering in Colombo Harbour. A delay of five weeks took place here,—but from England flashed the news that matters were not pressing and as yet Portsmouth had not even been isolated. So Togo and the Generals did not fluster; everything was being done with the maximum of celerity, and day after day ship-loads of soldiers came in,—hundreds of swarthy Dogras, thirsting for the fray, thousands of nimble Goorkhas lovingly fingering their razor-edged kookris, tens of thousands of stalwart Sikhs, stern, unbending men, never known to flinch, ever ready for a fight. When finally the anchors were raised and the huge concourse of ships pointed south towards the Cape of Good Hope, there were considerably over one hundred units all told. The speed of so vast a fleet was of necessity slow, averaging no more than ten nautical miles to the hour.

At Cape Town the battleship "Hizen" developed certain minor defects and one of the transports, the "Warwickshire" of the Bibby Line, ran aboard the

battleship "Sagami" necessitating a visit to dock extending over three weeks. The gallant Japanese Admiral fretted terribly over this enforced delay, but wisely decided not to proceed until the two injured and important units had been completely repaired.

At last the end of the voyage came in sight and he halted at Gibraltar and considered what he should do with his convoy in the event of his meeting the enemy. He finally decided to send them west, whilst he with his sixteen warships steered directly for the German fleet, the movements of which were well known to him, he having been in constant wireless communication with England since reaching the Rock. It is hardly necessary to remind my readers that interference with wireless signalling had been rendered quite impossible owing to the perfected system of tuning now employed by every nation. This special "tuning" could not be known to an enemy except through a code book wherein in cypher were instructions notifying the essentials for obtaining that "tuning." Hence, though radiations had on occasion vibrated the Teuton instruments, the effect had been nil since they were absolutely devoid of meaning, the same statement applied of course to the British receivers.

For some time Togo steamed slowly north, and had just completed his plans for the dispersal of the transport fleet when a message came through from Admiral Angler telling him of the Kaiser's escape and of his intention immediately to proceed to sea and engage the enemy. From that moment onwards the Japanese Admiral was kept in close communication with the British fleet and he knew as each minute passed how the battle was going with his allies. When he at length learnt that the superiority of the Germans was no more than three

vessels,—ten Teutons to seven British,—he signalled his four fastest battleships and an equal number of powerful armoured cruisers to raise their speed to the highest and follow him. His own ship was capable of over twenty knots but he did not exceed seventeen and was delighted to receive a message from the three "Mikasa" class that they could do an extra three-quarters of a knot if need be; thus at nearly eighteen knots the Japanese squadron, as we have seen, headed the flying German remnant and had no little to do with their ultimate surrender. The remaining seven armoured Japanese ships had been left to guard the convoy against possible marauders.

When the combined British and Japanese Fleets with their ten prizes reached the Isle of Wight, Admiral Angler called a council meeting in Prince Louis's cabin, the Japanese Admirals being invited to attend. The proposition set them by Sir John was the following:—

"The Germans have a battery of large guns mounted "on a position commanding the Town and Dockyard; "but they are not making use of these owing to a threat "of death to their monarch who was captured on the "Elsass." Now the Kaiser has fled. The question "is:—has he reached his friends and adjured them not "to fire until we return, or has he as yet been unable to "make good his escape?"

For some considerable time these men of warfare debated the question and at last it was decided to anchor the ships in Sandown Bay, where one of the captured German ships had to be beached to save her from sinking. In the meantime a message had been flashed across to General Baron Nogi to steam in with twenty thousand troops. By sun-down the Japanese transports had arrived and the hero of Port Arthur was given a hurried outline of the situation.

"What I want to know Baron," said Sir John Angler, looked admiringly at the nut-brown little veteran,—“is whether you can rush those guns?”

For ten minutes the General examined a contour map of the position and asked a dozen searching questions about it. He quickly made up his mind,

“You shall have the position in two days, Sir, John,” he said deliberately, with that quaint hesitation of a man accustomed only to his native tongue, “but I must have a few more men.”

“What, more than twenty-thousand?” queried several of his listeners in a breath,

“If the hill is all-important,” said the stern soldier, “then the loss in lives is not a matter for consideration. The soldiers of Japan” he cried, raising his voice, “are proud to die for their revered sovereign.”

“You will not fail, General” asked Prince Louis, “for failure at this time might prove fatal to our plans.”

“I will not fail,” replied Nogi with conviction, “but to make more certain, let the additional soldiers be British. Give me Dogras and Goorkhas,—they have much in common with my men and a spirit of competition will be aroused which will be beneficial in increasing the mutual dash and sustaining the stamina.”

As this sentence was translated to the Admirals,—for Baron Nogi could not say much in English,—they applauded him. In less than five minutes the liners bearing ten thousand Dogras and Goorkhas had been called up and directed to make with all speed for Portsmouth. General Nogi had decided to take the bull by the horns and steam straight into the Harbour and land his men,—judging it certain that the guns would already have opened fire on the Docks and Workshops had the Kaiser managed to rejoin his own country men. More-

over he had night to aid him and much wished to get all the business over before daybreak. And in these days things moved quickly,—delays were features of a past age and celerity had long ruled where dilatoriness once upon a time was a bye-word.

Now one piece of good fortune had fallen to the British Forces. When the German warships had surrendered to their superior foe, boats had been put off from the British attendant protected cruisers with crews to take possession. The German officers' first care in every ship had been not unnaturally to rush for the Code Book and cast it in its leaded cover into the sea. But on board the "Hessen" an accident had prevented this being done immediately. One of the masts had been shot down and, in falling, had barred the way to the captain's safe in which the code was kept. Hard laboured the two senior officers still alive to reach it and as the British prize crew mounted the torn and battered side of the Teuton battleship, they had just succeeded in levering the safe into a position in which it could be opened. In a trice the key was in the lock and a moment later one of the lieutenants was speeding up the twisted iron ladder on to the deck. He saw a burly Jack Tar standing, bare-footed, at the head of the gangway, but without heeding him rushed to the side and threw the book overboard. Instead of the splash he anticipated, a loud imprecation ascended from below. He turned as white as a sheet and peered over the bulwarks.

He had thrown the book into an English gig!

And it had fallen on a naked toe,—and hence the full-flavoured swearing that greeted him.

By the evening a number of British Marconi apparatus were tuned to the German standard and presently useful information was pouring into the British camp in a

cypher easily translated by the aid of the captured code. Moreover the German Headquarters was the recipient of some astounding messages,—messages they could not but believe as they were transmitted in their secret code! And it was well advertised in the English papers that “unfortunately all the code-books had been thrown overboard in deep water before the surrendered ships were taken possession of.”

That particular Monday night was sombre and clouded, and guided by skilled pilots a small fleet of huge liners crept carefully into Portsmouth Harbour and were without delay berthed alongside the vacant wharves. By three o'clock next morning the first to be emptied of its living cargo was towed by tugs out into the Solent; and under its own steam, and the escort of two large protected cruisers, it made for a rendezvous previously appointed. With short intervals ship after ship discharged its load and left; so when the first light of morning came, no more than eight transports still remained. And as the troops were put ashore they were marched without delay to the station and entrained, five hundred at a time, and conveyed the five or six miles forward to the British lines. All they carried was their arms and sufficient food for twenty-four hours,—their work would brook no delay. And this mobilization took place with astonishing quietness,—so quietly indeed, that until midday on the Tuesday the people of Portsmouth had no idea that a single unit had been added to their defences. Yet round about the captured hill Japanese and Indian troops were creeping up,—ever advancing, foot by foot. Thirty thousand there were in all, the finest fighters in the world.

Every English defender was withdrawn; Baron Nogi laid it down as a condition that this time the new-

comers, if they were to claim the subsequent glory of the victory, should at least have the entire brunt of the assault.

Foot by foot they advanced, taking advantage of every speck of cover, moving with the skill of the North American trapper and the quiet of a stalking tiger. Little the Germans knew of this danger drawing ever nearer,—nearer.

Whilst this surrounding movement was taking place at the very centre of operations, other matters were rapidly developing around the invaders of equal if not greater importance. In the early hours of Tuesday a number of ships flying the British Ensign and that of the Rising Sun appeared off Lyme Regis,—this port had been held by the British Troops against all westerly attacks of the Germans. An hour later Sidmouth, Exmouth, Teignmouth and Torquay were similarly astonished to see transports anchored as close into land as their draught would permit. Presently at all five places thousands of soldiers were debarking and with them guns, horses, provisions,—all the impedimenta of a huge field force. As they landed, well organised trains steamed east with them to the front. One set of metals ran train on train at one minute intervals eastwards, whilst down the other set poured empty vehicles. All worked like clockwork, smoothly and without a hitch. Later in the day more ships cast anchor in Bridgwater Bay and at other points along the Bristol Channel; Harwich, which had been taken by the Germans and converted into a base for a northerly attack upon the Metropolis, was bombarded by a few small cruisers and presently retaken as well as a large quantity of stores. Dover saw thirty thousand landed and despatched west at high speed.

The meshes were closing fast about the invaders!

Meantime Lord Kitchener had completed his own plans and over a million stern men, bent on a lasting revenge, awaited the word to rush against the audacious foe,—now at last cut off for all time from their own country.

But the crucial moment was not yet. Twenty five thousand active Militia and Volunteer troops were on their way from Canada and would arrive on the Thursday and Friday in the huge Allan, White Star and Cunard liners. Then the forward movement would begin in earnest. The hardest feature of the situation lay in the strongly fortified hills about Portsmouth,—for here the Germans had employed all their skill and art in the matter of defensive works and to breach them at any point seemed almost an impossibility. But we had on our side the greatest living master of attack,—General Baron Nogi, and to him we looked for guidance in the great matter of piercing the Teuton lines. And he helped us splendidly, his war-worn veterans running to the battle as to a pleasure party,—aye! those were days of heroes, yellow heroes, black heroes, white heroes, all heroic in a vastly patriotic courage.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Fight around the Hill

Captain Eberkraft of Wilhelm Hill, as the captured eminence had been renamed, was sitting on a gun-platform overlooking the town of Portsmouth. It was Tuesday evening and the sun had just gone down behind a bank of light filmy clouds,—a much different evening to that of the night before. He dozed in the balmy air of the late summer evening and wondered in his dreams when he should have a chance to use the six fine guns he commanded,—so strong and yet so weak. A sentry going his rounds touched his shoulder and whispered into his startled ear,

"A moving man did you say, where? quickly?" demanded Eberkraft, and he followed the pointing finger of the extended arm. A dull figure could just be distinguished against the sombre darkness of the soil, a darkness intensified in that the shadows and the evening light blended in one indefinite grey. For a moment the young officer looked and then gave an order in a whisper.

"It is a single man; bring me Klingen and Schuss,—we will try and capture him."

Three forms stole silently out of the small redoubt,—two from one side, one from the other, and converging noiselessly towards the figure first seen, crept inch on inch towards the unsuspecting man. Eberkraft could see he was dressed in a British uniform and wondered at the audacity of the spy,—for such he must surely be. He crouched behind a rock and waited the oncoming

man. A minute passed,—he could hear the heavy breathing; five seconds elapsed and the Captain had leapt forward and was kneeling across the prostrate figure of the mysterious stranger, holding a large service revolver to his head.

"Ein Wort, und sie sind Tod!" he hissed, pressing the chilly muzzle into the skin of his captive. Here he received a shock, for a voice sighed in perfect German,

"Gott sei dank,—entlich!" the man had fainted!

With great care the officer and two soldiers lifted the unconscious man and bore him behind the redoubt and into the shelter of a bomb-proof. Eberkraft seized a lamp and held it to the white face of his prisoner. He started back, astonished.

"Gottes Himmel! der Kaiser! ! !"

In a minute he was at the side of his monarch doing all he could to resuscitate him. It was only a swoon and a little neat spirit soon brought the colour back into his wan cheeks. The King looked about him.

"Wo bin ich?" he enquired anxiously.

"Mit Freunde, Majestät," answered Eberkraft, tenderly helping his sovereign into a sitting position. A few sentences explained matters and the Kaiser gave a sigh of immense satisfaction on finding himself once more in the hands of friends. He said he had not expected to find friends and imagined he was crossing the last crest in the hands of the defenders. He had also not eaten for many hours and Eberkraft speedily set meat and drink before him.

"Tell me, sir, your name," queried the Kaiser, looking up of a sudden at his saviour.

"Captain Eberkraft, sire" replied the young man.

"Then Captain Eberkraft, I promote you Major on my personal Staff, and endow you with the Iron Cross.

The nation needs such men as you. But, tell me, why have you not used these guns so well placed for damaging the Town and Dockyard?"

Eberkraft told the Kaiser of Admiral Angler's stratagem and the King swore under his breath at the trick that had been played by his erstwhile captor.

"Well, now, set to work at once. If it be the ill-fortune of my son Oscar, who is still a prisoner, to be killed at our hands, I must accept it. No sacrifice is too great for the honour and success of the German arms."

By this time news of the Kaiser's arrival amongst his own people had spread through the German troops and these gave cheer on cheer as they learnt of the glad occurrence. The Kaiser himself, after a short rest, went down the lines to Headquarters and was received by Baron Mucklestein with all solicitude.

But before he had been safely settled in a comfortable bed for a sorely needed sleep, a great crash sounded from Wilhelm Hill and six shells ploughed lanes of destruction through Portsmouth houses. Another loud report and a similar number fell clattering down into the dock-yard—wild shooting, of course, but the night was comparatively dark, though clear. The guns were speaking at last!

The heavens were now lit by a myriad of twinkling stars and but for the methodical reports of the great guns, hurling out their steelen projectiles upon the sleeping town,—though few alive slept now, whilst not a few slept for ever,—a comparative silence reigned,—the calm before the storm. At midnight a dozen small lights appeared around the hill in a great circle,—the Japanese were repeating the tactics of Port Arthur and had ignited flares to guide the artillery of the neighbouring

forts. Scarcely had the lights from these burned an inch high before an awful rain of shells was flung into the dark centre, the explosions putting to shame many a volcano of evil repute and blasting great quarries out of the solid hill side.

The assault had begun as suddenly as a lightning-flash. And the Germans knew it well and hurried thousands upon thousands of reserves up to the threatened point,—it was indeed to be a fight of giants. For two hours the devilishly bombardment continued, not because it was hoped thereby to drive the Germans from their posts, but because under its shelter the Japanese and their hardy little allies from northern India were cutting sap-trenches and constructing parallels upon the most scientific and approved principle, and by this means were every moment getting nearer and nearer to their objective. As the night rolled on and searchlights gleamed from a score of different heights, the work of killing grew more furious. A sharp counter fire had commenced and shells fell thickly amongst the massed reserves, necessitating their removal to a more sheltered place. Star-shells burst high in the air, speeding, rocket-like, thousands of feet above the forts discharging them, and as they burst crackling into a hundred twinkling lights, small but excessively brilliant spurts of flame shot from the darkness, and shells smashed death-ful into the illumined space. For with each boom of a cannon came the greater crash of a splitting projectile close to or in the middle of the ground upon which the phosphorous lights glittered. Then of a sudden a hoarse order sounded far down in the valley, and the tramp of scurrying feet rang clear between the roar of guns. The Japanese were making their first assault.

A German searchlight flitting over the hill-side un-

masked the assaulters and commenced to work violently up and down the sky, signalling a new menace to the garrison. Of a sudden the light went out and the gallant Japs were left to work their way forward in the impenetrable smoke and blackness. The British guns had now ceased and the pants of the mounting men carried far across the clear air. The assaulters were allowed to press nobly up the slopes and get within pistol-shot before the Germans greeted them with rapid volleys and, from a supporting fort, opened a regular cloud-burst of decimating shell-fire. In hundreds the brave men fell, yet regardless of life the Japanese infantry went on with their storming resolved to a man either to win or die. In ten minutes they had reached the parapet and, getting into a dead angle, a few score of them calmly squatted down, and lighting a number of hand-grenades from a perforated bucket of live charcoal, (brought up by a sapper) commenced a lively grenade bombardment of the interior. For a few minutes the air simply quivered with these deadly missiles, but the tables turned with a vengeance as a troop of Germans forming a sortie party rushed, with bayonets fixed, upon the small group of Japanese.

The little Easterners fought magnificently, but were outnumbered by more than four to one and were all bayonetted. This ended the first assault upon Wilhelm Hill. That night four similar attempts were made and each time repulsed with severe loss,—the Germans were not going to give in until every cartridge had been fired or every man killed. The knowledge that their new enemies were Japanese had given them, too, the courage of despair. They remembered 203 Metre Hill at Port Arthur and realized that though they might repulse them a hundred times, if the Japanese had made up their

minds to take the position, take it they would, be the cost what it may..

That first night's onslaught gave no return but dead, and frenzied men with half a dozen gaping wounds were drilled through and through with rifle-fire by the Germans who had become like wild animals with a lust for blood. A hideous chortling of maxims and other automatic guns, the wierd and continuous knock! knock! ! knock! ! ! of a score of pom-poms, confused, distinct and again confused rifle-volleying searched the blood-stenched air,—and then, nothing ; the assaulters were shot down to a man. At a word the artillery spoke once more and tore and blasted the hill of death with a tornado of high-explosives. Next day as light came slowly through the gloom of hanging smoke, it was seen that of the former contour of Wilhelm height but a slight resemblance remained. It had lost much of its height and a jutting peak to the west, once prominent, had been battered away until there remained a gently sloping mound to mark where once a point had been. The hill appeared as though a hundred quarries had been worked out and the shattered stone cast rubbish-wise down the steep slopes: for on every hand were huge craters formed by a score of shell holes and around the rim of each were splinters of rock and steel.

And mixed up in this awful debris were scattered thousands of bodies, some limbless, all torn and mutilated beyond the powers of recognition. Small rivulets of turgid blood gurgled slowly adown the rocky gullies and occasionally a detached head slipped off its stony catchment and fell to bounding over the slope towards the valley. Every art of war had added a new agony to death and amongst the dead clay of these brave fighters lay rifles, bayonets, grenades, swords and

accoutrements of every description,—and tons, tons of steelen shells and lead from rifle bullets. Yet of the mass lying there not a man moved; all had been killed and more than killed, slain a thousand times and then torn asunder still to add to death. It was war, indeed.

Next day the assault continued unabated; though robbed of a complete success, the Japanese and native troops had made considerable progress and their trenches were much nearer and more favourably placed than one might have expected in view of the stubborn defence. All through the day two of the guns, so well placed by the Germans as to be out of reach of the British artillery, flung shot on shot down into the Dock-yard and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage was done.

At midday a parallel had reached to within one hundred and fifty yards of the summit and a young Japanese officer, Captain Iwamura, offered to lead three hundred men on a forlorn hope towards the top. Permission having been granted he gave a wave of his sword and followed by his men, rushed forward to almost certain death. Some such act was anticipated, however, and as the Japanese, (yelling a loud Banzai!) cleared the trench, an equal number of Germans shouting hoarse war-cries jumped from the escarpment and ran to meet their foe. Their officer was Major Eberkraft,—and a braver sortie has never been recorded. In a minute the two bodies met in deadly conflict and, as though to watch the fight undisturbed, the artillery duel stopped in an instant.

On they came and were into one another; heavens, how they fought, Teuton and Nipponese. Frenzied to the verge of madness, neither gave a foot and at last but three men remained standing, Captain Iwamura, Major

Eberkraft, and a German sergeant. The two latter made for their small foe, the sergeant glaring like a savage beast and brandishing a huge sword. Iwamura smiled and clutched his own blade the tighter in a blood-stained hand,—he had torn an ear off his last opponent!

The two Germans closed on their enemy together and the sergeant's sword swished whistling through the air; in another second it would have descended on the small Japanese had he not leapt nimbly on one side; the shining gore-stained blade slipped from the hand that held it and spun clattering fifty yards away.

In a flash the Jap was on his giant foe who for a moment stared astonished after his lost weapon. Eberkraft sprang to intercept him but slipped on a loose stone and came down, sprawling.

Not so the Jap. His heavy sword described a vivid circle round his head, an eerie cry came from between his narrow little lips and then,—the keen edge fell fair across the sergeant's neck.

A fearful shriek of anguish rose up to the skies and the head, severed as neatly as a corn-stalk and wearing in death an expression of agonised surprise, leapt from the brawny shoulders and tumbled to the feet of Eberkraft, who shrank back horror-struck. The decapitated trunk, standing still for a brief second, spouted a fountain column of blood and then crashed to the ground.

Iwamura grunted with satisfaction, wiped his sword on a cap near his feet and turned to Eberkraft; he noted he possessed no weapon and stood sheepishly wondering what the Japanese would do to him. His sword had been broken at the hilt and his automatic pistol had fallen, as he stumbled, into a shell-blasted pit. Iwamura solved the problem; flinging his bade away, he held out

his hands to signify they were now upon level terms and said in quaint English,

"I fight you?"

Eberkraft understood and nodded; also he realized it would probably be to the death. He first advanced and held out his hand and the little Japanese took it and shook it heartily.

"You are ready," he said, and noted that a thousand German heads were watching them from the fort above and thrice as many of his country-men stared fascinated up from the trenches below. A truce had been declared by tacit mutual consent, whilst this single combat was fought out.

For a space, a short, pregnant space, the two circled about each other and the strange audience had good opportunity of viewing the men. The German was a fine, healthy young fellow, full of pluck and energy, muscular, well-built, weighing may be twelve stones and a half, and standing nearly six feet in his stockings. The Japanese was in equally good training, equally well built and of about the same age, but here the resemblance ceased. In height he could not have been more than five feet three inches and his weight would be nearer nine than ten stone. Yet despite the disparity in size he had a confident assurance in his own prowess.

At last the German closed and boldly seized his lighter antagonist by the waist. A flash of shooting arms, a quick outward thrust and Eberkraft leapt back holding his throat; Iwamura had forced him to relax his hold, a dangerous, strengthful hold, by a sudden and painful pressure upon the "Adam's apple." His little brown eyes sparkled with merriment whilst the German muttered an imprecation under his breath and with a roar like a lion made for his sprightly foe. This time

he was more successful and succeeded in getting his burly head pressed firmly against the chest of his wiry antagonist, his muscular arms wound tightly about the buttocks. A quick slip downwards and Eberkraft had the Jap by the ankles; he gave a mighty heave with his great shoulders and amidst wild shouts from the fort, Iwamura was seen flying over the German officer's head,—hands first! A fall such as this would have ended the fight once and for all, but the Jap had no intention of such an ending just then. As he shot, face down, over his opponent's shoulders, Iwamura gave a lightning glance beneath him and with a movement as sudden as it was expected closed his booted feet sharply on either side of Eberkraft's neck,—thus not only breaking to a large extent the force of his own fall, but simultaneously flinging the German backwards to the ground.

For a moment they lay as they had dropped,—exhausted; and from the watching Japanese and Germans came a thunderous applause. For a space, it seemed, the mad anger of the combating nations had died away in the momentary but absorbing interest of this extraordinary duel.

Eberkraft was the first to rise. Blood ran from a cut in the back of his head and he breathed heavily as, with hand on hip, he endeavoured to regain his breath. His opponent still lay stretched out,—on his back, for he had turned over,—apparently oblivious to the fact that Eberkraft had risen to his feet and was standing not ten feet away. The German took a step towards his enemy; Iwamura seemed at that moment to be made of springs, for he was up in a twinkling and awaiting the onslaught.

A smile still flickered over his heated face, on which a deep gash could be seen, doubtless caused by falling on a sharp flint.

"Him good fall," he cried, with some spirit,—and the troops in the opposing trenches readily grasped his meaning and roared with delight. Again the German led the attack and this time secured a telling hold which all the ingenuity of the Jap seemed unable to sever. This way and that they swung in laborious conflict, sometimes the one giving a pace, at other times the other; once Iwamura fell to a knee and bore his antagonist's weight thus, and to the watchers it seemed he must be forced back by Eberkraft who brought all his superior weight and greater strength into play. But the Jap swung to one side and the pair twisted as on a pivot until the German was working up-hill and the Japanese downwards, this giving him a more than compensating advantage.

He rose with a jerk to both feet and, as though struck by some idea, dodged smartly to the right, offering a way to Eberkraft who, seizing it, as no doubt Iwamura desired, went up hill four paces and turned on his small foe now below him. The Japanese Officer seemed to weaken,—at least so the German thought and pressed his advantage home with renewed vigour.

Then the end came,—startling and dramatic, Iwamura appeared to slip on a stone, fell backwards with his head pointing down hill. Taken completely by surprise Eberkraft stumbled forward and sprawled over the prostrate body of the Japanese,—whose legs were curled up on his stomach, the feet pointing upwards. In a flash they shot out, lifting the body of the Teuton Officer clean into the air and, aided by the impetus of his own fall, he landed with a sickening thud ten feet down the hill-side. But almost as he fell the Jap. was up again and in a bound was sitting astride the fallen man, ready to deal with him should this last effort have been insufficient.

Eberkraft did not move and Iwamura noticed that his right leg was twisted under him in a curious manner. He felt quickly over the body and unseen by either side slipped a thin sheaf of paper from his antagonist's coat into one of his own pockets. Then he raised the German with an effort, gently straightening out the broken leg. Still the truce reigned, still the two masses of troops stared at this astounding scene,—and then came one of the greatest deeds of the campaign. Bending down until he lay nearly full length upon the ground, Iwamura carefully levered the unconscious form of his foe on to his shoulder and raising it with infinite care, set out slowly up the hill towards the fort on the crest!

Both sides guessed in a moment the *raison d'être* of this manoeuvre and wild cheers arose in recognition of the most magnanimous act of the war. Arrived at a bastion he quietly deposited his burden and awaited two German Red Cross bearers sent out to meet him.

"Bad hurt," he said simply, and, after saluting the garrison strolled carelessly back to his own lines.

That fight was over!

Twenty seconds later the assault began again with renewed and deadly vigour. General Nogi sent forward Lieutenant-General Samejima with ten thousand reserves and ordered him in conjunction with the five thousand troops already in the firing line, to make a direct assault on the eastern and southern sides of the hill, whilst eight thousand native British troops swarmed up the western slope. The infantry were soon ready for the attack and were marched down handy gullies and valleys to the trenches and parallels to enable them to get as near their objective as possible before appearing into the open. Arrived at the main parallel heads, they were speedily dribbled through the pierced entangle-

ments, and spread about behind the sand-bag and turf shelters. When all available cover had been occupied,—and the small veterans hid themselves in holes that the average mouse would look upon with scorn,—the reserves were massed at the entrance to the parallels.

At a bugle note the attack began and presently the Japanese were working their way up towards the crest, finding plenty of cover in the pits quarried out during the initial bombardment. Every available German was brought forward to repel them and at least ten thousand Teutons hurled volley on volley, and rained tons of deadly grape-shot upon the advancing Easterners. Their danger, however, lay in another direction ; so much attention was being devoted to the southern and eastern slopes that the west was left well-nigh unwatched. Perhaps two hundred men held this side,—for not an enemy could be seen. A loud order, a howl of fiendish delight, and a swarm of black forms were leaping madly up the slope, firing wildly as they came. A German officer yelled for help, but the position was three hundred yards in width and the supporting soldiers had therefore some distance to run. The Goorkhas were within a hundred yards of the top and as the Germans rushed to the loop-holes and barricades, twenty bamboo ladders clacked against the wall and twenty dusky faces appeared above the parapet ; twelve fell dead amongst their companions, but the other eight ran huck-a-muck into the Teuton troops. Another twenty came up and five dropped,—three minutes later Dogras and Goorkhas were swarming over the wall in continuous streams and charged the defenders with wild yells.

Swish ! Swish ! went the glistening kookris of the little native hill-men, and heads fell lolloping here and fell lolloping there.

The British rush not only breached the defence but also relieved the pressure upon the Japanese and a long drawn out "Banzai-ai-ai" announced the fact that the garrison was between two fires. Then ensued a fierce bayoneting and cruel hand-grenading and, amidst the wierd cries of the victorious allies, the Germans were forced out of the position and compelled to retire on their supports. Yet even so the carnage did not cease; undismayed by their terrible losses a regiment of Dogras formed up and led by a gallant young officer charged down hill upon the German reserves, bayonets fixed and rifles hipped. With a crash the opposing forces met,—and the Teuton enemy gave before the awful onslaught and fell to running hot-haste here, there and everywhere,—anywhere, indeed, to escape their terrible antagonists.

Wilhelm Hill was again in British hands and from its summit fluttered the flags of the Empires of the East and West!

In that awful contest there fell seven thousand six hundred native troops,—some half of which were killed outright or died subsequently of their injuries; twelve thousand Japanese,—seven thousand killed and the remainder wounded; on the German side there were no less than twenty-three thousand casualties and at least fifteen thousand brave fighters never again saw their beloved fatherland. Hence, it will be seen that the few hours fighting about this insignificant though all important position resulted in the death or wounding of nearly forty-three thousand combatants. Yet the gain was fully worth it from the military standpoint, since at least the Dockyard and Harbour were now safe.

General Nogi at once took all necessary steps to render the recaptured position secure from future molestation or assault and then paraded his brave troops and

those of India to thank them for the splendid way in which they had carried out their work. General Baden-Powell, upon whom the whole onus of the defence of Portsmouth had fallen and who had so nobly and capably resisted the attacks of a vastly more numerous foe, rode by the Japanese veteran's side and regarded the troops of the England of the Pacific with unfeigned admiration. And the Goorkhas and Dogras had also done magnificently,—such work as theirs placed them straightway beside the finest fighters in the world. Indeed, a very large percentage of the German casualties had taken place subsequent to the recapture of the hill—when the small hill-men so gallantly pursued the fleeing garrison and fell, reckless of their own lives, upon the unsuspecting and disadvantageously placed Teuton reserves.

After the review, the men were told they might take a rest, as their services for hard work would not be required for a few days. The next sign was to come from Kitchener and Kuroki on the other side of the enemy.

Having dismissed his troops, Baron Nogi sent for Captain Iwamura and asked him to recount his fight on the hill, since General Baden-Powell wished to hear it from his own lips. Modestly and with striking simplicity, Iwamura told the tale,—a trifle haltingly it is true, for his English was not perfect. Nogi and the English General congratulated the plucky young officer, and the former asked if he had any other information to give; Captain Iwamura felt in his pocket and produced the bundle of papers he had taken from the unconscious Eberkraft. Nogi glanced at them and seeing they were in German, a tongue unknown to him, passed them to Baden-Powell. The General looked at them for a few minutes,—they appeared to be a series of private letters,

and threw the first three down on the table after a hurried glance had proved them valueless. As he read the fourth, however, his eyes opened widely and he indulged in a low whistle of surprise. Nogi, all expectant, asked through his interpreter if it was anything of importance.

"Yes, it is. Tell the Baron that it informs us that a convoy of six transports with stores, cannon and ammunition is on its way to Portland under escort of three small cruisers and two coast-defence ships. This is a private letter written about a week ago and merely mentions this matter casually; we should let Sir John Angler know immediately. With the enemy's secret code in our possession we should manage to persuade them that Portsmouth has fallen and that Portsmouth, therefore, is more suitable for a debarkation than Portland!"

"I agree with the General, tell him," he said to his interpreter and right-hand man, "and think those cannon may come in very useful for us."

Baron Nogi smiled delightedly at the good news and saw the force of the suggestion conveyed in the last sentence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Sweeping the Channel

No sooner had the menace of the guns upon the contested height, now finally renamed Tragedy Hill, been removed, than the combined fleets were brought round from Sandown Bay into Portsmouth Harbour and the Dockyard staff set to work with great energy to repair the damage caused in the recent action. It was discovered upon an examination of the prizes that the damage that they had sustained was more visible than real and that in the case of three of them, few repairs were needed to render them again fit for active service. But it had not been the intention of the authorities to touch the prizes until the last, so the Admiral-Superintendent of the Dockyard was taken considerably by surprise when he received instructions to dock immediately the two least damaged ex-German ships and, with as many hands as could be employed upon them without getting into each other's way, remove all traces of the recent action.

So the "Preussen" and "Braunschweig" were tugged into dock, balanced and shored up. A swarm of workmen poured on board and presently the new electric derricks were removing all irreparably damaged spars, cowls and other fittings. Of course it would have been impossible in the short space of thirty hours to repair any damaged part in the usual way, so recourse was had to "exchange" with the unharmed fittings of their more seriously shattered sisters "Hannover" and "Hessen," —the last having been floated on the high tide and

brought into Harbour. Thus the "Hannover" contributed a new main-top-mast, three guns of 6.7 in. calibre and a funnel, whilst the "Hessen" sent over half a dozen light guns, a davit or two and an uninjured 11 in. gun to replace one broken in the fore-barbette of the "Preussen." Cracked plates had to remain, though thin iron or steel sheets were patched over here and there and thickly coated with grey-paint.

When, on the morning of Friday, about midday, the twin battleships steamed slowly out to sea, the on-lookers lining Southsea Common commented upon the lack of damage they had sustained and the speed with which every trace of the fight had been dispelled. As soon as the land had been well cleared, the officers went below and donned the uniforms taken from the captured officers,—the sailors likewise robing themselves in German kits. Then a German flag went up the lines from each ship,—and the transformation was complete.

All is fair in love and war!

In view of the dastardly method whereby the enemy had scored an initial advantage, any deception to outwit them was justifiable. They did not expect to meet the ships for which they had come out until Saturday afternoon; the letter had been explicit in saying "they leave here on Wednesday and as they are convoyed by the slow old 'Baden' and 'Bayern,' cannot arrive at Portland much before Sunday evening or Monday morning."

Saturday dawned misty and chilly, but since Rear-Admiral Wilfrid expected to pick up the enemy by wireless telegraphy long before sighting them, the inclemency of the weather caused him no worry. At 10.30 the Marconi operator received a call. He answered in the German code, a copy of which he had at his side. The following series of messages was then exchanged,—

"Who are you?"

"His Imperial Majesty's battleships 'Preussen' and 'Braunschweig,' make your numbers."

The enemy gave the required code numbers and then continued,

"Have you come out to look for us?"

("Good gad! I should just think we had!" commented an excited officer.)

"Yes; instructions for you from Admiral at Portsmouth."

"Portsmouth? you mean Portland," queried the uncanny indicator, and Admiral Wilfrid chuckled as he realised how, whilst holding strictly to the truth, he was leading the Germans into the trap.

"No, Portsmouth. German Fleet is now anchored in Portsmouth Harbour and battleships are at present being repaired in British docks at England's expense!"

"Has a battle taken place?"

"Yes, but we are not much damaged. We secured a great victory over the enemy and sunk or captured all his battleships or armoured cruisers."

Again Admiral Wilfrid laughed,—never had double reading of a message signalled meanings so vastly different, meanings so wholly contrary and opposite one to the other. The Germans had been quite disarmed from the first, not guessing that a copy of the code could possibly be in the possessions of their foe.

"Thousand congratulations on glorious victory," ticked the Teuton operator and as was remarked afterwards it is uncommon for members of a vanquished nation to send such a message to their conquerors! At midday the two battleships picked up the convoy and joined the escort, one on either side. There were the "Königsberg" and "Danzig" new fast cruisers of 3,300 tons, and the "Kaiserin Augusta" displacing 5,956

tons,—somewhat out of date but fast and well armed. The coast-defence ships were more important, these being the "Baden" and "Bayern," of about 7,400 tons displacement and mounting each six great guns of 10.2 in. calibre and a numerous quick-firing battery. But at the moment they were as peaceful as the transports they convoyed,—half a dozen vast ships capable of carrying an immense cargo of war-stores.

For that day and the following night this strange company steamed west together, the British in their German-built ships keeping a wary eye upon their companions lest by chance they should have any suspicion of the true state of affairs. By eleven on Monday the small squadron was close to the Isle of Wight, proceeding very slowly owing to the fog which had prevailed for the last few days and seemed even denser nearer the land. Admiral Wilfrid here played his trump card by sending the German commander a message directing him to make for Sandown Bay with his battleships and three cruisers, as it would be impossible to find berths for them in Portsmouth owing to the congestion of the harbour! The transports were to steam into the Solent, where they would be picked up by pilots.

Early in the afternoon the five hostile vessels dropped anchor, all unsuspecting, in the middle of that fine, sandy opening flanked on the one side by the chalk heights of Culver Down and on the other by heavily-wooded Shanklin and the adjoining cliffs. The fog hung as a damp, white blanket about them and to see more than a few yards in any direction was impossible.

Captain Nierich sent off a launch in charge of a lieutenant, to land and ask for instructions and make a report; the launch never returned. At six o'clock

Captain Nierich fancied he heard other anchors being dropped,—to seaward of him; he sent out a second launch to see who it could be and this launch, too, failed to come back. Nor could he get any reply to his wireless signals, other than a confusion of unintelligible signs and letters. That night many of the Teuton officers felt too uneasy to enjoy an unbroken sleep and Captain Nierich's over-strained brain evolved a hundred fanciful explanations of the mysterious happenings. And over it all hung the dank fog, clinging and impenetrable.

On Tuesday the fog had lightened,—the yellowness had gone out of its composition and a white glare from above told of a brilliant sun. As the group of German officers stood on the bridge of the "Baden" gazing fixedly into the blinding vapour, a cool air current fanned their cheeks. Another zephyr of air; the fog started curveting and twirling in a fantastic dance and out of the thinning mist grew the indistinguishable forms of many more vessels. A third puff, developing into a steady wind, drove the last traces of the fog far out to sea and the astounded Germans grasped the iron rails and stared about them, open-mouthed, in bewildered stupefaction,—

They were surrounded by huge British battleships!

Landward were their two decoys, the "Preussen" and "Braunschweig" with the white ensign fluttering languidly in the awakening breeze; in a wide circle, outside the ordinary torpedo range, stretched four "King Edwards," the giant "Dreadnought" and the two "Lord Nelsons"; and steaming to and fro out to sea were five mighty Japanese ships!

Some flags fluttered up from the "Dreadnought."

"Do you surrender?"

Captain Nierich looked around the encircling monsters with his binoculars and noted that every gun that would

bear was trained upon his little squadron. He thought of opening the Kingston valves and sinking his ships, when a further string of bunting ran aloft,

"Reply definitely in two minutes or we open fire; any attempt to sink ships will mean annihilation."

Captain Nierich realized that a single combined discharge from the guns then laid on his small force would blow them out of the water.

"Es ist kismet," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

Giving the necessary orders for surrendering he went below to his cabin. Thus five units were added to the British Navy with the loss of but one life. On boarding the "Baden" to take over the surrender, the British officer in charge descended to the captain's cabin and opened the door.

Captain Nierich lay on the floor with half his head blown away, his right hand still gripping the butt of a revolver.

When the six German transports arrived off the mine-field protecting the entrance to the Solent, the captain in command hooted thrice according to instructions. A launch shortly appeared at the gangway of each and up the steps ran—a British naval officer!

"With your permission, captain," said they to the respective skippers, looking behind to see that their men had mounted behind them, "I will now take command. Please attempt no resistance or the destroyers, of which you can just make out the forms of one on either side of you, will be compelled to sink your ship. And that would lose many valuable lives."

High on the surrounding hills the German besiegers heard the ringing cheers of many a thousand throats, as the six transports steamed into the Harbour under British escort. But the fog hid the meaning of the cheers and not for two days did the anxious General-in-

Command of the Portland Depôt learn the fate of the sorely needed stores and re-inforcements ; for when the fog lifted, the watchers saw the German transports lying snug in Portsmouth Harbour. But they did not see the battleships. The three protected cruisers were there,—they had been brought round from Sandown Bay.

Presently a wireless message came to Portland,—what an untold blessing that captured code book was proving ! —that after a severe fight, in which three English ships had been sunk, the "Baden" and "Bayern" had managed to escape south and, whilst one was making direct back to Germany, the other would run into Portland under cover of darkness and give a detailed report of what had taken place.

Meantime curious things were going forward on board the "Baden" and "Bayern." The German crews of both were landed and put under a strong guard as were all those taken in the transports and the three cruisers. For the success of the next two moves in the game of revenge depended upon the capture of the two battleships being kept a profound secret. The "Baden" was quickly remanned, and a skilled staff of torpedoists put on board,—then she put out to sea and sailed, as evening came down, in the direction of Portland. The "Bayern" remained behind and about her were collected a concourse of barges and hoys ; launches steamed in never ending circles around these and forebade any inquisitive pleasure craft off the shore from approaching. Large iron globes were seen being lifted on board—they looked uncommonly like electric contact mines of the sort that had proved so fatal during the Russo-Japanese War! Then there were cases marked "Dynamite,"—any quantity of them! This loading went on for two days and the "Bayern," getting up steam, also put out to sea

and sailed, as evening came down,—eastwards, keeping well away from the coast. To her mission a separate chapter must be devoted, for the present we will concern ourselves with the "Baden," which, we have seen, was steaming towards Portland.

Dame England, emblem of the free, has ever been kind of the alien and has taken him to her motherly heart and nurtured him, viper that he is, in the warmth of her bosom. Of all the aliens that received kindness at Dame England's hand, the alien pilots proved the most ungrateful. Hence it is not wonderful to learn that the invaders employed for their pilotage in and out of Portland Harbour one Van Beeren, a stolid, blear-eyed Dutchman, with little knowledge of the English language and none at all of the German. So his employers had perforce to use the tongue of their enemy to make their desires known to him,—not that he cared over much for whom he worked so long as the pay was good.

In the German instructions, under the heading "Pilots," appeared this note:

"Vessels desirous of entering Portland shall signify the same by exhibiting two red flares and hooting once during the display of the second (in thick or foggy weather three syren blasts, short, long and short, shall be given) when a pilot will come off and after inspection will take charge of the vessel or vessels, no more than four to follow under guidance of the same pilot during the passage."

In the "Baden," Captain Mainwaring, who with his entire crew had volunteered for this particular cruise, studied this note and presently when his boatswain came down with the news that they were four miles out only, he gave directions similar to those contained in the captured code.

In a few minutes the port side of the erstwhile German battleship was glowing resplendent in the ruddy beams of a bright flare ; when this fell and spluttered to a finish, a second commenced and with its increasing light there burst forth a loud hoot from the steam syren. An answering flame came from the land and twenty minutes later a small brown launch puffed importantly up to the towering vessel and a voice called out in rough German, "What ship are you?"

"The 'Baden'—escaped from those d—d Britons," came the answer, and a certain English lieutenant, whose fluency in the Teuton tongue had been a bye-word in the Service, went up strongly in the estimation of his anxious listeners.

"All right; pilot coming aboard. I suppose one of you can speak English?"

"Yes,—enough for him," was the ready answer.

A clumsy figure seized the rope-ladder and swung hand over hand up the side, whilst the snorting launch steamed pace for pace back to the harbour. Van Beeren saw nothing wrong as he mounted the bridge and settled himself in the chart-room,—all the officers were German, for that he could see by the uniforms. Captain Mainwaring had thoughtfully left a black jar of Schnapps, with a handy glass, on the chart table; Van Beeren looked at it, winked at the helmsman, took his bearings and then looked at the flask again.

"Point to po-art!" he directed in a stentorian voice and his left hand fell on the glass. The lieutenant who spoke German came up and hoped his false moustache and beard would not fall off during the interview. In broken tongue he bid him good evening. Van Beeren's glance was on the Schnapps.

"Two points starbud!" then "Gut for drink, heh?"

"Ja! Very gut,—try him," and the officer poured the pilot a stiff nobbler and he cleared it at a gulp.

"Point to po-oart and straight vorwerds!" his dirty sleeve wiped his smacking lips,—Schnapps was good.

"Hart werk, nicht war?" queried the Englishman.

"Noa; no mines thees channel, all sham for dam. Shermans loose zui mooches ship and clear away allem mines, forsure."

The Lieutenant noted the information for future use and gave a hurried glance about the ship, for they were now passing the lighthouse. He saw that the six heavy guns were swung outwards and kept thus, steady. Behind him he noticed two crouching figures and he suddenly made a movement with his hand.

In a flash Van Beeren was down on the ground, gagged, bound and taken below by a couple of powerful Jack Tars. The "Baden" was now well inside the anchorage and was sailing gaily up the lines of ships, chiefly merchantmen, flying the German flag. But it was the war-ships that engaged his attention and he and Captain Mainwaring looked them over with critical eye. Below in the engine-room British stokers were getting up a head of steam which, it was hoped, would give the old ship all her fifteen knots at a pinch. She had been designed for seventeen knots but laboured beneath thirty years of service; yet her Dürr boilers and triple-expansion engines were new, having been installed comparatively recently. There were four armoured ships and five small cruisers, with a large number of torpedo craft and gunboats.

Amongst the battleships were the "Sachsen" and "Württemberg," sisters to the "Baden," and the smaller "Odin" and "Aegir" of 3550 tons. The cruisers were unimportant; now the "Baden" had five torpedo tubes,

one submerged on either side, two above water in the bows and one in the stern. In these, torpedoes lay ready for firing and men with a spare projectile were close at hand. Captain Mainwaring dipped the flag in ordinary sea-courtesy and made for the last mooring at the end of the harbour. Here he swung his ship around, backed and again went forward this manœuvre bringing him facing the foe which were now stretched out between him and the way to safety.

He called for twelve knots,—if more were made the certainty of hits would not be so great. In two minutes he had come level with the "Odin" and a torpedo leapt from the starboard submerged tube, ran a hundred yards only and exploded with a deafening roar.

One foe gone!

Mainwaring waited a moment, then gave another order, and this time two torpedoes sped away; the stern one hit fair the protected cruiser "Prinzess Wilhelm" and with half her bows blown off, she sank into the mud. The other torpedo missed a cruiser by a foot, and Mainwaring cursed under his breath.

By now the entire harbour was in a state bordering on panic and the rattle of steam-winches hauling at stubborn chains sounded amidst a confused babel of shouted orders, bugle calls and shrill hoots. Mainwaring swung a few points to port and fired a bow tube at the "Sachsen,"—and with success, for a gerb of foam rose over the stricken vessel's stern and, with both propellers blown away, she commenced to settle down. Here his guns came into play and three huge shells entered the close side of the sinking monster, completing the destruction already so well begun. As the captain gave the instructions for firing the remaining bow torpedo at the

"Aegir" at a range of barely fifty yards, a message came up that the first three tubes were loaded again.

"By this time the "Würtemberg" had got under weigh and was steaming across the entrance to bar the road of escape to their hardy antagonist. Mainwaring noted this and turned four heavy guns on her straight sides, receiving four in return. All his shells went home,—he was firing at a broadside target. Three of the Germans' missed,—they were firing at a comparatively narrow bow,—and of those that missed the "Baden" two hit a small protected cruiser in the line of fire, the "Undine," and drove her under water. But from the first the fight was uneven, everything favouring the one ship, which had come with full steam up against unprepared and anchored opponents.

Under the impact of the four shells, the "Würtemburg" gave a little and lost, moreover, the use of two heavy guns. Her one shot that found the "Baden" did damage, of course, but of no great moment. Four more shells smashed her in a minute's time and she turned slowly and left an opening for which Mainwaring, who had telegraphed down for full speed, now steered. As he approached his shattered foe, a torpedo rushed on in advance, but before it had reached its mark, another one, fired from the side and under the water, was racing after it. With an interval of a few seconds both struck and the German ship heeled over and began rapidly to fill.

At sixteen knots,—the British stokers made those boilers hum!—the "Baden" went through, dodged a little so as to get the stern tube bearing on to the broken ship, and then fled away; the British Ensign waved gallantly from the masthead.

The last torpedo exploded with devastating force and

swung the split hull across the narrow entrance so that exit was impossible. Since the Germans had themselves blocked the only other opening it was obvious that pursuit by the remaining torpedo craft and three small cruisers was out of the question. They all remained safely imprisoned and later were sunk to avoid falling into British hands.

Some Socialist editor in Germany next day recalled a quotation from an English officer's letter to his father, a well-known Baronet (in Chapter XVI. this letter appears in full) and gained some notoriety and many enemies by its publication:—

"I pity the Germans if we get the upper hand again; "we intend to sink or capture everything afloat bearing "the German flag, even down to yachts"

And in this work the British Navy delighted. One by one the remaining German ships added to the tale of disaster. To-day a cruiser, yesterday three gun-boats,—every day something. Junior officers were in their element and, now that the menace of the battleships had been permanently removed, the "clearing up" work was left almost entirely to them in their destroyers and torpedo-boats for, as the senior Admirals remarked, it gives them initiative and offers them an occasional chance for distinguishing themselves. One youthful lieutenant gained a great name by floating into Poole Harbour in a launch roped tightly under the lee of a fishing smack. A single torpedo hung in releasing gear from the disengaged side and with this it was his intention to sink the small coast defence vessel "Heimdal"; the "Heimdal" lay well up harbour, but as, during the whole siege, the Germans had been accustomed to see the fishing fleets go in and out much as they pleased, (for the people in the captured towns had of necessity

to live) it was no novelty for them to lumber in on the heavy tide that particular afternoon.

There were fifteen smacks, and the launch-tied one brought up the rear. Some went to the one side some went to the other of the guard-ship,—for in that capacity was she stationed there. Just as the last of the fishing craft drew level, the launch dropped behind and, steering for the ironclad, fired the torpedo at a range not exceeding eighty yards. Then the audacious officer and his few plucky volunteers put about and steamed as hard as they could for the open sea; so unprepared were the Germans for this attack that their antagonists made their escape unmolested. The torpedo ran true, dived just before striking and expended the full force of its awful explosion upon the thin hull sixteen feet below the water-line. A vast sheet of flame sprang upwards followed by smoke and mud, and the "Heimdal" sank immediately upon the muddy ooze, resting thus on an even keel, her upper deck flush with the level of the water. Three quarters of her crew were rescued by the fishing smacks, the remainder being drowned or blown to pieces.

A host of British cruisers, protected and armoured, patroled the coast line of England and Germany, and not only prevented the sending of stores to the hard pressed invaders, but completely disorganised the over-seas trade of the German Empire. Destroyers made many raids into this Harbour or that Bay and cut out steamers of all and every description. As days passed, the captures mounted to many hundreds and at last few vessels larger than row-boats could be found anywhere on the German coast. And every Teuton family had read that fatal sentence: "We intend to sink or capture everything afloat". . . .

CHAPTER XXX.

The Episode of the Kiel Canal

To Captain Mahon, late of H.M. Scout "Forward," belongs the credit of initiating what has come to be known as the "episode of the Kiel Canal." Captain Mahon, having put forward the proposition, was obviously the right man to see it carried into execution and so with a carefully selected crew of one hundred and eighty volunteers, of whom seven were officers, he had steamed off up Channel in command of the ancient "Bayern." Amongst his subordinates he had an old friend, to wit, Lieutenant FitzHerbert,—fitter than ever and possessing if possible even more of his proverbial high spirits. Though still a youth, his deeds in the destroyers and lastly in connection with the sinking of the "Pavel I." had shown him to be a young man of sound judgment, unusual courage and great dash. Hence Captain Mahon welcomed him as a member of his small force for this forlorn hope,—it could be called nothing else.

The initial idea had been brought about through a certain article (in a well-known technical journal), entitled "The Widening of the Kiel Canal." Herein it was set forth how, the Kaiser having insisted upon his warships being increased in displacement to place them on a level footing with the "Dreadnought" and her similars building in other countries, it became necessary to deepen and widen the Canal to allow of the easy passage from Kiel to the North Sea of ships displacing 18,000 tons or over. This work had been entered upon with great

despatch and zeal and it was anticipated that by the time the first five huge battleships were ready (in the German Navy all ships of the line are built in batches of five) the canal would have been advanced nearly to completion. This widening had made steep banks in certain places and particularly was this the case near Grünenthal, where a huge, arched railway bridge spanned the cutting. Now the Kiel Canal is worshipped by the German people as a national "darling," and it was anticipated (and rightly) that to damage it badly would be a good means of bringing the arrogant foe to his knees. Such a work Captain Mahon now undertook and how he carried out his plans is a story as remarkable as it is exciting.

The "Bayern" it will be remembered, had been reported as having escaped the British Fleet, and the authorities at the Cuxhaven end of the Canal awaited with anxiety the arrival of their ship. Captain Mahon had, however, a most difficult task to perform, for not only would it be necessary safely to get into the Canal, he had also to contrive to get out again at the Kiel exit. When at last land was sighted, numerous wireless messages came to him asking for news. But to these demands he remained silent and contented himself with signalling that he had important news which he must take in person to the Admiral commanding at Kiel. It was an audacious move, but in view of the momentous happenings of the last few days, including as they did the practical annihilation of the German Fleet, it did not surprise the authorities at the Elbschleuse, or North Sea Locks. Mahon had cunningly contrived to arrive at even-tide and as the "Bayern" crept slowly up to the wharf, the few onlookers saw nothing suspicious about the British Jack-Tars arrayed as they were in the full

uniform of the captured German sailors. A Teuton officer came on board and prior to mounting the steps, gave directions to a junior on the quay to rig up as speedily as possible the bow-search-lamp to facilitate steering through the canal at night. He reached the deck and made for the bridge,—

Four men closed about him and muffled his half-uttered cry for help; he was gagged, bound and carried below to a secluded cabin. Meanwhile the engines were slowly revolving and the "Bayern" made at snail's-pace for the open lock-gates. Those on the quay suspected nothing. Their officer had gone on board and doubtless would remain there until the ship reached Kiel. In the lock a pilot came on board; Captain Mahon had already decided to do all the necessary pilotage himself; so the pilot also of a sudden lost his footing and felt a horny hand clapped over his mouth. He, too, was deposited below, bound, gagged, and vastly astonished to find himself in the company of the lock-officer similarly trussed.

The inner gates were by now slowly opening and the "Bayern," presumably conned by an authorised pilot, drew steadily out into the narrow water-way. Ten minutes later she was speeding at nine knots down the centre of the canal. Now the prescribed speed is 5.3 knots per hour only, and this would take a ship through the whole ninety-eight and half kilometres in thirteen hours. But the "Bayern" had certain halts to make and therefore speed to the utmost in safety was called for,—and a huge white back-wash seared the smooth banks behind the rushing monster. At number thirty kilo-metre the ship slowed down and eventually was carefully brought up alongside the high bank, just beneath the towering pillar of Grünenthal Railway

Bridge. Here the side had been cut back so much that, to his delight, Captain Mahon found he could moor his ship quite up to the bank. In three minutes she lay motionless,—in six, half a dozen wide gang-ways were laid to the shore and five-score men tore backwards and forwards between the ship and the excavation dug deeply beneath the bridge-foundation, carrying heavy boxes of dynamite. For a full hour they worked and at last their labour was o'er. Then a young electrician went carefully to the great pile of explosives and with infinite caution fixed a detonator and a clock-work regulator, timed to fire the charge in twelve hours from the time of setting.

Again the "Bayern" rushed away and the course being here straight as a line, Mahon ventured to increase his speed to twelve knots. He held on so until the seventy-fourth kilometre, where the canal sides again rose steeply aloft on either side. Here he slowed down and a series of splashes at intervals of a few seconds indicated that a quantity of mechanical mines were being skilfully dropped overboard into mid-channel. These mines, several hundred of them in all, were so arranged that the explosion of one would mean the explosion of all,—and the immense upheaval of such countless tons of gun-cotton would tear the bottom of the smooth canal to rags and shake down whole avalanches from the towering banks on each flank. They were all of them of the same kind,—huge globular iron-tanks, containing a vast charge capable of blowing the bottom out of the stoutest vessel afloat, and so connected up that to tilt them ever so slightly would cause a mercury-bath to overflow and join the two poles of a small electric current, this in turn sparking and igniting a violent fulminate, the shock of which would detonate the main explosive.

mass. To render them harmless whilst being laid, a large block of sugar filled the hollowed well intended for the mercury, thus preventing the latter from spreading over the danger spot and forming a circuit. After the mine had been in the water for about two hours, this sugar, connected with the exterior by a little pipe, would melt away under the influence of the sea-water and allow the liquid mercury to flow unrestrictedly,—and then, woe betide the man or boat that touched the mine sufficiently to tip it over even a few degrees!

Four such strings of mines were planted, each string connected with the other by a thin water-tight electric cable. They lay separated by a clear six hundred yards and themselves extended over nearly another kilometre, so that by the time the last of the mines was in the water the "Bayern" had reached kilometre 80. Here a short halt was made to safely anchor the last mine of the long, deadly line and it was during this halt that Fitz-Herbert came to Mahon with a most curious message.

"The wireless is working a message from Kiel, sir, and from what we can make out, a large warship is coming through the canal and they want us to tie up at the next cutting about three miles further on and let her pass. What reply shall we send?"

For a few minutes Captain Mahon thought deeply,—then with a decisive gesture he said,

"We'll do it, by Heaven! we'll do it. And if it *is* the ship I suspect, it will make our friends the enemy madder than ever. Tell them 'all right' FitzHerbert and enquire the name of the ship they're sending through."

"Very good, sir."

On his return a few minutes later, he had a most momentous piece of information.

"It's the new battleship 'Nassau' of the 17,710 ton

class, sir, she's going through to commission at Wilhelms-haven. They say, too, the tide's at 'half' and we can steam straight through into Kiel Harbour, the locks at Holtenau being open."

"Glorious, glorious," exclaimed the Captain, excitedly, "we're going to win, FitzHerbert,—we're going to pull it off, you mark my words! But we must get the 'Nassau' to tie up instead of ourselves. Let me think how to work it."

Kiel Canal, similar in this respect to the Suez, has the banks at certain sections cut out to so great a width that ships are able to pass one another without danger. These cuttings are known as "Ausweiche," and the "Ausweiche" indicated in the message was at kilometre 84,—just four kilometres nearer Kiel than the last of the contact mines laid by the "Bayern." The warping of a ship into one of these "Ausweiche" is a long, tedious business and getting her away again also takes time,—perhaps forty minutes. Captain Mahon was faced with a difficult problem, for when the two ships lay side by side, the 'Nassau' would have a bare four kilometres to travel before being blown up,—(and this certain catastrophe would at once throw suspicion on the "Bayern," which would no doubt find the Kiel lock-gates closing her only means of escape,)—whilst the "Bayern" had still about twenty kilometres to run through. Now twenty kilometres is nearly eleven nautical miles, which would take the "Bayern" at the very least one hour to steam from the "Ausweiche" to Kiel.

If Mahon were to warp up in the "Ausweiche," the "Nassau" would have met her fate long before he could again be under weigh, so he hit upon a stratagem whereby he hoped to overcome the difficulty. He remained anchored at kilometre 80 and stolidly awaited

a message from the approaching German ship. Presently it came,

"Why are you not moored into the "Ausweiche,"—we are just making up to it from kilometre 85?"

Back went Mahon's answer,

"Unfortunately ran ashore at kilometre 80,—am now off; can you moor up and let us pass as we are on urgent business."

"Very annoying but will do so," ticked the reply and Captain Mahon went on deck much elated and signalled for seven knots,—more he dared not employ whilst passing the "Nassau." Presently the tall masts of the newest German warship hove in sight against the glimmering dawn and a few minutes later the Teuton-dressed British sailors were crowding the sides of the "Bayern" and gazing admiringly at the huge craft they were passing. She had three immense funnels and an armament of twelve 11 inch guns paired in vast steel turrets. Little did any on board suspect that within the hour they and their fine vessel would be hurled into the air!

As soon as the magnificent Levensau bridge had been left astern, Mahon increased his speed to twelve knots and rushed his ship through the still, narrow lane of water in a manner that made early-risen rustics along the green banks hold their breath in amazement. Luckily the day was quickly lightening and already the darkness of the preceding night had greyed before the rising sun. Captain Mahon called for a cup of hot cocoa, a few biscuits and a cigar,—and he soliloquised thus:

"The 'Nassau' will take the usual time to unmoor and get under weigh, about forty minutes; she has four kilometres to steam at, probably, six knots, about twenty minutes,—total, one hour. We have eleven knots to steam and are moving at just over twelve, but must

allow more than a knot for bends. It is now 5.30 and we have been going since 5.15; at 6.15 we shall hear a noise and should, with luck, simultaneously be passing Holtenau. Can we do it?"

"Just about, sir, I should think," said a cheery voice, coming up on deck.

"Cheeky young devil, FitzHerbert, to join in without being invited. But was I talking aloud? Well! well, we've cooked our cake and must eat it now, good or bad. Are those torpedo tubes filled?"

"Yessir,—we may want 'em as we pass down Kiel Harbour."

"Egad! I should think we may. And you might see to it that all the guns have a charge in them."

"Very good, sir."

For thirty minutes they held on thus and at last the banks became more alive; folks came out to see the long awaited ship (the German flag was all there, of course!) and in spite of the early hour, Captain Mahon and his small crew received quite an ovation from the ever increasing crowds. He slowed to nine knots, cursing the necessity whilst doing so,—and kept a wary eye ahead and an expectant ear astern. At Knoop, still three kilometres from the Kiel locks, a dull roar rose out of the stillness behind him and looking back he saw a vast umbrella-shaped cloud of smoke shooting giddily into the air twelve miles astern. He gasped with apprehension and rang down for the utmost speed,—for all disguises would be useless now and he feared,—the WAVE!!

At sixteen and a half knots he rushed along, raising a ten foot wash over the containing banks as the steel hull roughly displaced the enclosed water. Two minutes past,—four,—and the sluices of Holtenau lay before him, the gates open.

Three hundred yards more and then for a time they would be safe,—Kiel Harbour would alone lie between him and absolute security. Suddenly FitzHerbert who stood beside him on the bridge, seized his arm in a fearful grip and pointed ahead,

"My God! they're shutting the further gates!! They must have discovered——I know——keep on, sir——bow tube——"

Shouting these disconnected sentences spasmodically, the young officer tumbled headlong below and in a few seconds was in the forward torpedo flat. A torpedo chanced to be in the tube and, brushing an intervening sailor on one side, he pulled the lanyard. A confused roar followed almost directly; something crashed in front and he was shot with great force across the steel deck and fell senseless against the door.

On deck, Captain Mahon clung tightly to the steel rail of the bridge and told the helmsman to "carry on" and not turn an inch. If nothing else would do he must *ram* the gates!

The Holtenau lock is capable of taking two battleships at once,—the "Bayern" was a short, handy vessel and ran neatly between the first open gates, steered with unerring precision. A crowd of uniformed officials shouted at him, but Mahon paid them no heed,—only looked ahead and awaited the coming impact.

A sullen roar made him turn round,—not half a mile away a high wall of foaming water came rolling at immense speed down the narrow bed of the canal. The Germans saw it,—shrieked with fright and fled incontinently.

The "Bayern" was surely doomed!

The closed lock-gates were fifty yards away only.
now——

A vast upheaval, almost beneath the "Bayern's" ram, came from the shut doors and by some mysterious means they seemed to split asunder.

The "Bayern" finished what the bow-torpedo had so well begun and slogged,oughing and squelching, into the deeper waters of Kiel Harbour. Behind her roared the huge avalanche of water and this, pent for a moment in the close walled neck of the lock, shot out like some demon host and chased hot-haste the fleeing "Bayern." Behind the "Bayern" came three German torpedo-boats,—they alone had had steam up when her complicity in the destruction of the "Nassau" became known.

They chased her hard and dodged successfully the many hurried shots fired from the light quick-firing armament of their quarry.

But the wave was chasing THEM!

Until that moment it had come as some giant wall, foaming, frothing and fearsome,—but not breaking wildly as the waves upon a beach. Now, however, it spread out and rose curling above the little torpedo craft. Their endeavour was not now to sink the escaping "Bayern," but rather to escape themselves from this new, unexpected and awful danger. Faster it raced and faster,—they steamed eighteen knots; it came at twenty-five!

The "Bayern" took it all in by the stern,—it rose in creaming volumes above her solitary funnel; but she bore through safely, drenched, smothered, streaming, and rode behind on the back-drag,—unharmed if wet. The torpedo boats took it all in, also astern; the crest curled round them, foaming and singing. Their little hulls rose slant-wise inside the darkening, hollowed curve and tried to ride to the level of the roaring walls. Then it broke,—

They were driven down, clean! No jobbery in that wave's work,—driven down *clean!!*

Eighty-two small craft sank that day in Kiel Harbour, including eight new submarines that lay with crews on board and hatches open. Tugs, yachts, torpedo boats, —all had a similar fate.

A few hours later the "Bayern" steamed into Nakskov Harbour in the Danish island of Laaland and, after taking on board sufficient coal to carry her to the nearest British port (for so much the law of nations permits) set out north by the Great Belt passage and in due course reached the shelter of St. Margaret's Hope in the Firth of Forth.

Little remains to be told of this extraordinary incident except, perhaps, some few words of the damage wrought by the explosions. This damage exceeded the wildest estimates of the audacious perpetrators. The "Nassau" hit the first mine at the precise moment that the charge at Grünenthal Railway Bridge exploded,—detonated prematurely by the passage of a heavy train. The great ship would seem not to have set off the first immediately, but rolled this one along her steel flanks until the second was reached. This second closed upon the other side and the two exploded simultaneously, ripping up the bottom clean out of the ship. Then came the vast combined explosion of the many hundred other mines in addition to that from the dynamite placed under the bridge. The effect was to fill at one fell blow the whole bed of the canal, the undermined sides falling in in huge avalanches. These descending masses of earth displaced in the space of a few seconds many million tons of water and raised the huge wave that caused so much damage to the shipping in Kiel Harbour and very nearly sank the "Bayern" and her plucky crew. Moreover,

it turned over the hull of the shattered "Nassau" and left it in two pieces across the devastated canal bed and, on the other side broke down the Elbschleuse locks and did incalculable harm to the small craft collected off Brunsbüttel at the mouth of the Elbe.

Grünenthal Bridge was blown to smithereens and two trains, coming in opposite directions, rushed madly with their living freights to an awful doom.

The news of this ghastly happening had more effect than anything else in bringing to the German people some knowledge of the result of the mad action of their Chancellor,—the sinking of the British Fleet, and it was perfectly evident to close observers that in Germany, at least, the desirability of a speedy peace was becoming increasingly noticeable.

But the British nation had not done with them yet.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Conclusion.

Captain Allen Nelson sat in a comfortable deck-chair overlooking the sea, a slight brown just beginning to show on his wan cheeks; yet since the terrible event that had knocked him over and caused the loss to the Germans of a first class battleship with most of her crew, a period of three months had nearly elapsed. Before him, on an invalid's table, lay a sheet of foreign foolscap and he bit the end of his pen before beginning to write. He glanced for a moment out across the Solent and listlessly followed the evolutions of six large torpedo-boats, German built by their cut, but flying the white ensign. Strung up-channel from the Spit-Fort (chequered like a gaming board and showing black muzzles on all sides) were anchored a line of warships—old friends many of them, such as the "Dreadnought" and "Agamemnon,"—but near them five of the prizes, altered and re-painted and proudly showing the flag of the sea empire. A year ago, he reflected, things had been as quiet as this and yet, how different! He looked towards his left arm—or more properly, where the arm should have been, and the empty sleeve made him wince; he had not become quite reconciled to it yet. From this unpleasant reminiscence he turned his gaze on the table by his side and smiled as his eyes lighted on a bundle of letters addressed to him,—the address seemed so unfamiliar—

Captain Allan Nelson, R.N., V.C., C.B., D.S.O.
"Very vulgar," he murmured to himself, and then with a sigh of contentment, "but it makes up for things a bit!"

A footstep caused him to turn his head; a lady, leaning on the arm of a stalwart German, was approaching him.

"How are you feeling to-day, Captain," asked the newcomer, holding out his hand.

"Much better, thanks. Every day seems to put new life into me. Your fellows hit me five times, you know, and that's quite a lot for one poor constitution to stand, eh?"

"True, but I rather fancy the last trick lay with you, what do you say, Xandra?"

"Oh! Oscar, please don't recall those awful times. The very sight of those horrid torpedo boats out there sends a shiver down my back. Besides, you've not told Captain Nelson the news yet."

"I left that to you, dear."

"Good news, I hope?" questioned Nelson.

"Yes,—of the best. The Crown Prince has been found in a small cottage near the coast; of all the crew of the 'Elsass' he alone was able to reach the shore and he was found unconscious by the good folks who have nursed him ever since. He had a sharp attack of brain fever and on regaining consciousness could remember nothing that had passed. Then one day, whilst reading an old newspaper, he came across an account of the 'Dreadnought's' cruise and on catching sight of the word 'Elsass' all came back to him: name, position and, indeed, the whole course of events since the commencement of this dreadful war."

"I am *so* glad to hear of it,—how delighted you must be. And His Majesty,—how does he take it?"

"My father looks ten years younger," replied Prince Oscar, "and now that my brother has been found alive and well, he regrets nothing of the past and seems as

cheerful as he was this time last year." Then, as a huge liner moved slowly out of the harbour, "There go some more of our men back to their fatherland and all those they hold dear," exclaimed the Prince. "Your organisation, Captain, is opening the eyes of even our Staff, and they are supposed to know something about it!"

"Things have bucked up a bit lately, undoubtedly, but there is still much to be done they tell me. When are you off, Prince?"

"To-morrow from London, and we leave here to-day, Captain Nelson, so we came over to have a last chat with my brave comrade of the sick-room. Xandra did well when she had your cot placed in my room, for your companionship has done much to lighten my convalescence. Then too, if you will permit me to say so, you have become very much to me, a something more than a friend,—perhaps its silly of me, but I have a deep regard and affection for you—Nelson—and well, Xandra, you must do the rest."

"It's this, Captain Nelson, Oscar wants you to come over and stay with us the moment you are fit to travel. Believe me, you will have a great welcome in Germany where your name is a household word, and now that all animosity is past they will receive you as any brave man deserves. Do say yes?" ended the Princess, pleadingly.

Nelson was greatly touched by her words, obviously sincere and springing from the depth of a loving heart. He took a hand of each and held them a space, tears welling up in his drawn eyes.

"It's awfully weak of me, Prince, I know, but your little wife has been such an angel, so sweet, so tender, that in parting from you I feel my two dearest friends are going away. If I can come to Germany I will with unspeakable pleasure and once again we will renew the

old association which will never fade from my memory. Goodbye, Prince, goodbye, little Princess, and God guard you both through the peace of a long and happy life. In two or three months, perhaps, we shall meet again. Goodbye."

In a moment they were gone, their hands tingling with the last grip of the impetuous young sailor who had so much endeared himself to them.

Nelson watched them enter the French-window, arm linked in arm, and sighed as he turned once more to his writing,—not yet begun. A silver-haired old lady came from the room where the Prince and his wife had disappeared and drew a chair up close to her son's side.

"I have just said adieu to the two young folk, Allan—sweet children both of them and with true hearts. Princess Alexandra has been more than kind."

"I shall miss them awfully, mother."

"I am sure of it, dear boy. But to whom were you going to write?"

"Edgar has not had a letter from me for some months and cannot, for a variety of causes, have heard the news of the last stages of the war, so I was preparing to write a few sheets and give him an outline of the events."

"Do, my son,—for though I have written several times myself, my letters have been so fragmentary that I doubt not he will be delighted to get a long description from his brother. You have two hours till tea-time; it shall be brought out here so that you need not move."

Left to himself Nelson set to work on his letter and (as this story has already reached dimensions far beyond the expectations of the chronicler) we might well glance over his shoulder as he writes and follow in his words the last phases of this disastrous war.

"My dear old Edgar,

"Three months have slipped by since I last wrote you, and never do I wish such another three months in my life. You will have heard of our little expedition in the B6 and the luck that attended us,—the mater is sure to have given you a pretty full account of it all. If it had not been for young FitzHerbert and that brick Robson, I should not be writing you now; just in time they nipped out on deck and seized me, hauling me into the interior of our little boat. The honours seem to be on our side over the matter, though I've been in dry dock now for eleven weeks, have lost three stone and my left arm, whilst little Fitz dropped half an ear and got a pellet through the tricep of his right arm, though it has left no permanent damage. Poor Robson seems to have been hit in the spine and his left side became permanently paralysed from the waist upwards; but the Admiralty have granted him a pension of £200 a year for life and a life pension of £100 to his wife should she survive and £50 to each of his three children after attaining the age of eighteen. Besides this, at the pater's special request he has been allowed to enter our service and has been made gate-keeper at the south lodge, cottage and thirty bob a week thrown in; all the country yokels collect round to see him and the mater tells me he has quite an ovation every time he goes into the village. FitzHerbert is now Commander,—and not yet twenty! They gave him one of the captured third class cruisers and he at once applied to be placed on commerce destruction work; before the war ended he had done so well that I hear his share of prize money will total nearly fifty thou. He's not improved a bit since you saw him before leaving with the small expeditionary force and is even more cheeky than formerly. Got

engaged, too, to the youngest daughter of Lord Hatmantown, the African mine-fellow, so altogether he's done himself rather well. As for me the bosses have been very kind, sending me up over the heads of dozens of others and loading me with beastly orders and things; my relations are so bucked up over it all that they can't send a letter without tagging all my distinctions (?) on after my name and I see the 'orderly' snigger every time there's something for me. I am sticking to the service in spite of advice from doctors and friends,—sea-air and responsibility are the only things that can set me up again. So much for persons and personalities,—now about the end of the war.

" You will remember that you left Bristol just before we smashed up the Dutchmen and either sank or captured all their remaining ships. During the following month, as we now know, the Jap. Generals were working out schemes with our own men for the final crushing of the invading force and then when all was ready Kitchener left to take supreme command. Meantime supplies were beginning to fail in the German Army, not a single reinforcement or store-ship having been able to help them, so the longer the last engagement was postponed the better it was for us. Then it came; by Jove, it was a Titanic battle, a total of nearly three million being engaged on the two sides and for three days a perfect Hell of slaughter went on until at last the Germans were sufficiently reduced for the men in Portsmouth to make a simultaneous move. The garrison had been reinforced from the sea up to a quarter of a million men and of these, two hundred thousand were pushed forward just when the advance commenced of the encircling ring. In five places their lines were successfully pierced and no sooner were the breaches

made secure, than an overwhelming force was concentrated upon the southern-most isolated division, thus facing them with but two alternatives—absolute annihilation or surrender! They chose the latter after losing thirty-three thousand killed and wounded and at once the victorious allies swept north and treated the next isolated hostile force to a similar movement. And so it went on until at last we found ourselves victors all along the line, with a loss, huge it is true, of ninety-one thousand killed and nearly two hundred thousand wounded. The enemy had one hundred and seventy five thousand killed and over four hundred and fifty thousand wounded, casualties of nearly fifty per cent of their forces. We captured, amongst others, the Kaiser for the second time, Prince Henry of Prussia and six minor Royalties, whilst they took weeks counting the Generals! Fourteen hundred guns are amongst the spoils, indeed in the history of warfare no such victory has ever before taken place. Even Oyama's efforts in Manchuria pale before the magnitude of this action. Of course this practically finished the war, especially when, following upon the news reaching Germany the whole of that country broke out into open revolt. Our King, God bless him, at once ordered a quarter of a million of the prisoners to be immediately despatched home under General Moltke to crush the spirit of rebellion and the latest news tells us that things are so much better that the Kaiser and his relations may safely return to their own land. What a miserable ending for him! He hoped to become the world-power and to out-Napoleon Napoleon and now,—no army, no fleet, a country in open revolution, all prestige gone for many decades, commerce destroyed and lastly everything that floats either sunk or captured. He seems to take it very well and was most

kind when he came down here and was brought up to me ; he congratulated me on my exploit and said how glad he was that there was only one of me,—my sort were too dangerous to be allowed out, he told me jokingly ! His son and his wife Princess Alexandra have been awfully nice to me ; you will remember how indefatigable the Princess was as a nurse. By the bye, I have a piece of news of a strictly confidential nature ; when I am quite fit I am to go over and stay with them, —which will not be for two months at least I suppose,—and if expectations are realised I have promised to be a god-father and the Kaiser has consented that his grand-child (and of course they pray that it will be a boy) shall be the first Prince Allan in the House of Hohenzollern. Rather amusing isn't it, but 'mums' the word, mind. Another piece of news ; the Crown Prince swam ashore and was nursed through a bad attack of brain-fever by a couple who, owing to his losing his memory and remembered nothing of the past and also disliking the idea of handing him over as a prisoner to the authorities, said nothing about their find until one day, reading an account of the engagement from which he had so luckily escaped, recollection returned to the Prince and he delivered himself up only to discover that peace had been declared. The terms of peace have just been published and I must say they are most kind. An indemnity of only one hundred millions is asked, the King considering a demand for a greater sum too crushing for a nation already tremendously impoverished. Besides this we are receiving a pound sterling for every prisoner. As to foreign possessions,—they give us German East Africa and all other African possessions,—so your work has not been in vain ; but in exchange we give them British New Guinea since, having purchased the northern half from

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the Dutch before the war, they may just as well have the whole island. Certain trade adjustments have been decided upon and a strong Imperial Party now forms the re-assembled House of Commons; Mr. Chamberlain's proposals have at last been accepted by an enlightened people and already trade is, I am told, booming. What else can I tell you,—you knew before you left that I would get the 'Thunderer' though her dimensions had not then been made public. She is of 20,800 tons and carries 10—13.5 in. guns, can steam 21 kts. and should be able to wipe out a large number of 'Dreadnoughts'; I commission her for trials on January 1st, so have until then to recover. The mater, who looks splendid now that all anxiety for me is past, is writing you herself. Father has been made a baronet for giving that Hospital-ship to the nation,—he well deserves it I think; you might cable him congratulations if the lines are in working order when you receive this letter.. I am sending this to Mombasa,—you are almost certain to come down there to await shipment home now that the Germans have ceded what you went out to take by force of arms. We shall all be glad to have you back with us,
especially your affectionate brother
Allan."

Lieutenant Edgar Nelson, 12th Hussars,
East African Expeditionary Force,
C/o. Transport Officer,
Mombasa, B. E. Africa

What else remains to be told? The war terminated, England and Japan, allied even more than formerly, held undisputed possession of the seas and constituted themselves arbiters of peace or war in the future. Japan obtained certain concessions from Germany and the

expenses of the war incurred by her. The menace of the German fleet had been removed for all time, and the prospect of many peaceful years dawned bright upon an era of universal prosperity. Russia, unfortunate partner in an unfortunate war, broke out once again in uncontrollable revolution and in the turmoil of rapine and murder the whole of the plutocrats fell victims. France, by an amicable arrangement, regained her "lost provinces" thus removing the constant cause of friction between the two powerful neighbours. But in England the most astonishing change was to be seen. The newly organised General Staff developed a type of universal military service to which none could take exception and for the first time in the history of our Army, the land forces of the Empire could boast as efficient an Administration as had governed the Navy for some time past. In other directions, also, great progress was to be noticed; Socialism, reconstituted, sifted and recast, found its level and fell into line with the Party of Imperialism that had finally swamped the base section of Little Englanders under whose governance the nation had suffered so much. Tariff Reform no longer a dream, had placed us upon a level with competitive nations in trade, and unemployment was daily becoming a thing of the past. The war, forced on us by a jealous power, wrought nothing but good at its termination, for whilst Consols again sped up past the long lost 100, the income tax dropped to a bearable maximum of sixpence.

A word as to rewards. Lord Kitchener became the Duke of Hampshire and "Bobs," the darling of the nation, His Grace of Berkshire,—in each instance half a million being voted to support the dignity of the new titles. Nor was the Navy forgotten as so often happens in the distribution of honours,—Sir John Angler, protest

as he might, was gazetted an Earl and seven junior Admirals found a place in the Upper House. By a curious coincidence the following notices appeared in the same number of the "Times" some months after the close of the war:—

"The marriage arranged between Commander Fitz Herbert, R.N., V.C., of H.M.S. 'Culver' (one of the German prizes) and Ethel Violet, youngest daughter of Lord Hatmantown, will take place at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on February 18th. His Majesty has notified his intention of being amongst the guests and the wedding will be one of the most fashionable of the year."

BIRTH OF GERMAN PRINCE.

"Her Royal Highness, Princess Oscar, better known to the British public as Princess Alexandra, gave birth yesterday to a son. Especial interest attaches to the event since the Kaiser has expressed a wish that one of the names should be Allan, after Captain Sir Allan Nelson, R.N.; V.C.; K.C.B.; of H.M.S. 'Thunderer', who stands with His Majesty as sponsor for the infant Prince. The latest bulletin says that both mother and child are doing well."

THE END.

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